#1

INYO MUSEUMS NEWS
Bulletin

October 1974

INSIDE MANZANAR DURING WORLD WAR 2

I was made an offer I couldn't refuse when Henry Raub suggested I write a series of articles on the inside story of Manzanar for the new MUSEUM NEWS BULLETIN. I shall offer my views as a former "inmate" because it offers me the opportunity to inform the readers the Who, Where, When and Why of Eastern California Museum's Manzanar camp display. I hope to be able to answer some of the questions in the minds of those who may be concerned.

It also gives me the opportunity to relive and relate some of the memories which I'm certain will arouse and disturb some of the sleeping ghosts of a nightmarish past. Many happy memories are also etched in my mind. My recent acquaintances refuse to believe that such an order (mass evacuation) had been passed to initiate the need for a camp such as Manzanar and many others like it. Two camps in Poston, Arizona; two camps in Gila, Arizona; a camp in Idaho; two camps in Arkansas; another in Colorado and Wyoming were some of the major areas of concentration of displaced citizens and aliens alike.

Firmly believing that the "Manzanar Incident" was most vital to the history of Inyo County and also to the eyes and ears of a nation indivisible, Directory Henry Raub has been working tirelessly to beg, borrow and 'wheel and deal" to gather and acquire "bits and pieces" from former camp inmates and local residents. From the old campsite where only the whispers and echoes of days long past, where sobs and laughter of our yesteryears whistle eerily through the grotesquely disheveled branches of the pear trees, Henry has spent many hours hunting for "treasures" with which he hopes to enhance his camp display.

The first of the camps, Manzanar, which literally sprung up overnight in the middle of a desert wasteland in the spring of '42 surely couldn't have been on the drawing board too long. The haste in which the 'wheels of evacuation" was set into motion makes one wonder if the army hadn't already been prepared with a printed manual on mass evacuation of "enemy aliens."

My nephew was one of the original Japanese volunteers recruited soon after war was declared with Japan. They had been promised good pay, (we'll go into that later) good positions and many other priorities which never materialized. Under the supervision of government employed Caucasian contractors, the so-called future living quarters for the American citizens who's only apparent crime was their Japanese ancestry, started to take shape.

A barbed wire fence was immediately strung the width and breadth of the area marked off like the fence erected to keep the cattle from wandering beyond the "no, no" zone. Guard towers taller than the tallest tree in the area were the next to come up with machine gunes and searchlights, with the power of a "zillion headlights." It was jokingly said that the street lights of Lone Pine were turned off at night because the searchlight beams of Manzanar kept the town well lit.

A hardy group was the special rattlesnake crew. Members preceded the sagebrush crew clearing the area of snakes so they could prepare the desert land for the barracks to be built. Water pipes were laid, the sewer system was developed, electric and telephone lines were strung and the area within the barbed wires soon took on the appearance of a large army camp. Really a very monotonous sight with identical tar papered barracks to a block and a very large "messy-hall" for each. Thirty-six blocks of living quarters were available after completion. Imagine, our waiting in line for occupancy--"cheap rent."

On U. S. Highway 395 trucks became a common sight to local residents as building materials and supplies were rushed in to "slap together" the future home for the displaced people from the west coast. Ten thousand to be near exact and it has gone on record as the town or community with the largest population in Inyo County. Most of the towns on "395" are only about a "blink" long, but many travelers during the existence of Manzanar will attest, the length of time it took to travel from one end of the camp to the other took more than 10 blinks of the eye. I know because I walked it many times. (On the inside, of course.)

I recall spending the early days in camp trying to understand the circumstances which led to our "incarceration behind barbed wires." What had we done to deserve it? The freedom enjoyed and taken so much for granted had suddenly been stripped from us with some signatures on the bottom line of a lot of legal words in small type. Was the teaching of democracy from grade school so shallow and meant only for others? Were my neighbors really so sad to see us leave, or only waiting to pick up what we were forced to leave behind? Our stored belongings disappeared. Who were my real friends? With the highway (so near) paralleling the camp, we would sit by the fence looking out at the unchanging landscape, pondering over the many unanswered questions running through our minds. The cliche "so near and yet so far" must have been born inside Manzanar. The cars and buses, close enough to touch would teasingly slow down, curious to the activity in our camp.

There was a little town to the south of us called Lone Pine and I used to relate to it with the "lonely-pining" feeling that I felt. Later, I used to go out to a high vantage point outside of camp (escapades--later issue) to watch the night lights of a town just north of Manzanar. How I used to long for a hamburger and a cool tall malt (and yet so far) which I know youths of my age were enjoying. The name of the town? Oh yes, It was INDEPENDENCE!

Next issue--FIRST DAYS OF MANZANAR. Shiro Nomura

#2

INYO MUSEUMS NEWS
Bulletin

NOVEMBER 1974

INSIDE WW 2 MANZANAR, PART 2

Before our trip into Manzanar to experience our first days in camp, let's reflect on some of the highlights and events that happened prior to evacuation from our homes.

We were unaware at the time, but December 7, 1941, was to be the beginning of a series of "happenings," unbelievable, nightmarish and bordering on fiction. Even Hollywood script writers couldn't have dreamed up better plots, although their stories invariably end with "and they lived happily ever after."

During the days immediately following the Declaration of War, many casual and shallow friendships withered on the vine and true friendships were tearfully pledged. The usual places of recreation and popular hangouts of the younger sets became strained and uncomfortable. It was difficult to determine a true hand of friendship from the more patronizing ones. It was to be start of many trying days.

Lt. Gen. Dewitt, Commander of the Western Defense Command, empowered with Presidential "Executive Order 9066" declared on March 2, 1942, the states of California, Oregon and Washington as critical military areas and "out of bounds" for any person of Japanese ancestry. An 8:30 p.m. curfew was imposed which limited our movements within a 5-mile radius of home under threat of imprisonment. Almost immediately after the order had been made the FBI dragnet spread out over the three states and started rounding up the menfolks, associated in any way with Japanese businesses and various organizations. Fishermen, teachers, clergymen and all others of influence were considered immediate threats to the safety of this country and were placed in special camps. Most of them never saw their wives and children for the duration of the war. The speed and the thoroughness in which the undercover work of this country was employed simply amazed me. Lists or names must have been compiled prior to December 7 in preparation and/or in anticipation of events that followed. Many days of fear and uneasiness were to follow. The fear was of the unknown. Not of guilt.

As numerous reports and wild rumors spread across the west coast unscrupulous businessmen and opportunists started a panic campaign in the densely populated Japanese communities. Armed with flyers and mimeographed official-looking letters they swarmed like locusts through the areas causing much concern especially to the families whose menfolk had been picked up by the FBI. Bargaining, cheating, stealing and even threatening the helpless people into giving up their belongings for a mere pittance of its actual value was certainly the height of mankind in its lowest form. The community which was most unfairly treated and the families hardest hit, or should I use the term "plundered," were the unfortunate resident fishermen whose lives were invested in their industry in Terminal Island, California. This is a story that must be told. (later issue)

We were living on a farm in Southern California when we received our eviction notice and I recall that it was a tremendous blow to my parents. As a matter of fact, to all of us. Selling, more like giving away or leaving their treasured belongings of almost forty years of living in America must have been a bitter pill for them to swallow. My parents had come to San Francisco from Hawaii in 1905. We were not faced with days of decisions as one would imagine, but days of waiting for notices, accepting them and following orders.

We stored as much of our belongings as possible in our garage (all lost) and loaded personal articles into our truck and car for the first phase of our moving. I can still remember my mother insisting on cleaning the house before we left. For most of us, there were two trying periods of packing and moving before we settled in a permanent camp for the duration of the war.

In hopes that our families would be able to remain together we spent a couple of hectic weeks in a house in Los Angeles (22 persons) living midst baggage and personal belongings and sleeping on floors in sleeping bags. I can still see the "wall to wall" bodies. The pressure of uncertainty hung heavy over the heads of the adults, especially those with children, but to the children each day was like a picnic. In the evenings the heads of the families would sit at the dinner table to discuss the new orders of the day and attempt to chart a course for an uncertain future. This same scene was being repeated in most homes throughout the Southland.

Finally the dreaded second eviction notice was distributed to the families in our district. Our orders were to pack beddings and linens (no mattress), toilet articles, extra clothing, essential personal effects and sufficient dinnerware for each member of the family. Imagine, not a mention of chopsticks and soy sauce among other every day necessities. I would say that the Commanding General and his staff lacked sufficient information on the care and comforts of the "enemy" Japanese. But this was War.

So on to Santa Anita Race Tracks, the Home of the Thoroughbreds whose stalls had been hastily remodeled to house the thousands of temporarily displaced victims of circumstance. Santa Anita Assembly Center was prepared and awaiting our arrival. The "Exectutive Suites" were swept and cleared of manure and supposedly fumigated. They could never rid the air of the fragrance of "second hand" new mown hay. We had been assigned numbers as heads of household and from that day forward thru the entirety of imprisonment, our family was registered as Shiro Nomura #3404. Finally we were prepared for our first day in camp. Baggages were all packed and each member of our family and our bags were properly tagged with #3404. Goodbyes were said again to those remaining for the later shipping out date. On the eve of our departure the Civil Central Station notified our district that it was unfortunate but our orders had been changed and our destination now was to be Manzanar. A new set of instruction meant unpacking and again prepare to leave in 48 hours. Further apprehension and fear was aroused for we had heard that Manzanar was in the middle of a God-forsaken desert land. We had seen pictures of the Sahara Desert so we had an idea what it would be like. Our new orders were to take leather hiking boots, heavy clothing, sleeping bags and canned and dried foods. The boots were not only "made for walking" but for protection against rattlesnakes. The womenfolk were all appalled. The heavy clothing was for the severe winters ahead and the canned and dried foods were for "emergency food." A compulsory campout.

A run on leather boots, heavy clothing and trunks and sleeping bags was created by the Manzanar-bound evacuees. They fanned out through downtown Los Angeles trying to shop and meet the 48-hour deadline. We were at the mercy of the luggage dealers. As news had preceded us the prices had been changed, and I noticed at a couple of places the price had just been crossed out and a higher price scrawled over it. We had to "take it or leave it." I could never understand how the official orders were intercepted before we received it.

With all of the repacking done and excess baggage sent to the local church for "safekeeping," we loaded our Manzanar-bound luggage on the army trucks which took them to the train yard — not the Union Station. Those of us that had assembled at the church were loaded on buses and shuttled to the train yard where the ancient iron monsters were to "quietly" slip us out of Los Angeles.

The morning of our departure was very cold and the skies were heavily overcast. Talking in low tones and casting furtive glances at the towering MP's, members of families and friends huddled in small groups trying to keep up their spirits. Suddenly at an order barked by the sergeant, the MP's moved in with rifles and bayonets and herded the people like cattle into a large group and unmindful of families and children, proceeded to split them up into smaller groups. The people already frightened and uneasy were momentarily panicked by the unemotional attitude of the military men in dispensing of their duties. Tempers flared as the menfolk in trying to protect their young confronted the soldiers until the officers intervened and restored order by commanding the soldiers to regroup them into family units. A hollow victor in time of defeat, but at the time a very sweet one.

With the semblance of order restored again we were ordered to board the train. The old-fashioned trains with high steps were designed for long-legged cowboys, and it was quite a sight to see the short-legged Japanese trying to reach the top steps. We finally got aboard and settled in the dusty, musty smelling seats of a day coach which at an earlier time must have been plush mohair in a beautiful deep maroon. Now, a badly faded, balding replica of its once regal splendor. The train pulled out of the yard, and after waving a final farewell to a few faithfuls who had come to see us off we started off on the first leg of our journey into "the promised land."

From the eyes of my aging parents, it must have seemed like the whole world was crumbling around their tired shoulders. They had suffered so much trying to provide a good living for us in a strange new world that they had adopted. The world which they had chosen for their children, to be born and educated and to be accepted as citizens with the rights and advantages in a land of freedom "WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL."

Shiro Nomura, Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

#3

INSIDE WW 2 MANZANAR, PART 3

After checking the human manifest the officials gave the green light to "the great iron monster" which lurched forward and slowly started to roll. We missed the familiar courtesy cry of the conductor's "All Aboard" which made this cold scene even more lonely and depressing. As we passed the once-famous Union Station I caught a glimpse of the towering city hall which would be my last for a long time to come. To a number of young men in our group who were later killed in action while serving with the 100th Infantry this was a final farewell to a landmark.

One by one the taller buildings slowly disappeared from view as the train made its way around the bend through the industrial section of Lincoln Heights. A few casual onlookers peered over the overpass railing to catch a glimpse of our "Grand Exit" from their city. "No flowers, no speeches, no fanfare." We left the city as "quietly and orderly" as we had lived. One evening recently as I watched the closing scenes of "Fiddler on the Roof" on television I couldn't help but relive the past and feel the hopelessness of a similar situation we had experienced 32 years ago. The forced evacuation of the Russian Jews from Russia was of a much earlier era, but the problems and heartaches created by the government and its political bodies must surely remain the same.

This action was reminiscent of the controversial decision that faced the Japanese American Citizens League in their role as mediators and spokesman for some 110,000 citizens and non-citizens on the west coast. Their final decision and the endorsement of the mass evacuation of all Japanese from this vital defense zone may or may not have prevented unavoidable incidents. (Isolated cases of beatings were reported.) Some felt that our own JACL was selling us down the river.....

The train picked up speed and the sights of the city and its familiar skyline faded in the distance. Choked up and misty-eyed, I leaned back into the hard seat of the day coach and closed my eyes for a moment as the reason for me and my family being on the train became painfully evident. I couldn't accept the fact that we were leaving our friends and our homes, labeled as enemies of our country. In all of my recollections from my early youth, I had always portrayed myself as the herd-type, the good guy, the knight in shining armor, and now, I found myself rudely shoved into the unfamiliar role of the bad guy. There would have to be a lot of changes made for I wasn't prepared to accept it. Our unknown destiny behind us, leaving our childhood dreams, our hopes, our very lives. Our future now was in the hands of America.

The sun burned up the early morning mist and as the day grew warmer, the general mood among the passengers lightened as the light happy chatter of the children started to fill the car. When the box lunches consisting of sandwiches, fruits and cartons of milk were distributed by the MPs, I was asked to help. It was a great ice-breaker for me as it gave me the opportunity to move around the car and meet and chat with the other passengers. I soon realized that I was not alone in this situation as I had imagined. As I moved about the car cheering people up I strangely found relief of my own. I immediately made new friends in Kow Maruki, Joe Nakai, Lillian Igasaki (she was pretty) and a few others. I met and played baseball with Lillian's uncle later in a concentration camp in Amache, Colorado. (Story on Amache later.)

As we neared an unknown junction the MPs going from car to car instructed our guards (two guards with rifles in each car) to have us draw our shades during the switching of cars. Apparently the fear of "white Indians" surrounding and circling the train, whooping and hollering in their hopped-up '36 Fords and attacking "the yellow pioneer settlers." I stole a peek from behind the blinds only to find a few passerbys who had stopped curious to the drawn shades. I did see small groups of "real Indians" huddled along the side of the station so I assumed we were in the desert country somewhere. We were to find out later that it was the town of Barstow.

After a few hard bumps accompanied by the banging of heavy metal couplings, the engine hissed out a blinding cloud of steam and we were on our way again. The remainder of the train ride was very monotonous and uneventful with sand, bushes and mountain ranges as far as the eye could see. Being unfamiliar with the geography of Eastern California I was at a complete loss to our general location.

We had been informed earlier that the camp was located somewhere in the middle of a desolate desert and in all appearance the rumors were bearing out true. I could almost envision myself as an Indian sitting on a camp stool in front of a canvas (modern Indian) tee-pee. I would have a heavy wool scotch plaid car blanket draped over my shoulders to ward off the cold winter winds as I Teriyakied jackrabbits and chipmunks over a coleman stove.

We reached our transfer point outside of a town called Lone Pine sometime during mid-afternoon. Awaiting us were more military personnel and city officials and it was a toss-up whether to insulted or honored. As we alighted from the train we were greeted by a light to medium wind which was only a sample of what we were to encounter before the day was over. We grabbed our hand baggage and prepared to board the many

Greyhound buses which had been activated to take us on the final leg of our journey. Having learned well from their first encounter, the guards warned us to stay together in family units. The passengers welcomed a slight delay while the luggages were transferred to trucks as it gave them a chance to stretch their legs. Carefully grouping us by seat count the guards (some of the guards had mellowed) assisted the old and the young into the buses as there was a mild scramble for the window seat by the youngsters.

After what seemed like hours the caravan of buses rolled onto the highway and headed for our destination, Manzanar. The hum of conversation and excitement mounted as the passengers sensed that the traveling ordeal was nearing its end. To the right of us was the Inyo Mountain Range everchanging its cloak of colorful hue as the sun sets each evening. To the left of us was the towering snow-capped peaks of the majestic Sierra. One of the most impressive sights and also one of the most unforgettable. Most of the camp days artists used this scene as a background for their pictures. Strangely many snapshots (cameras were taboo in camp) showed up with the Sierra as a back drop.

It seemed like we had just settled back comfortably in our seats (the only decent part of the trip) when the bus driver stated as a matter of fact to those within earshot that the camp would soon be visible. As the word spread throughout the bus excitement mounted as everyone strained forward to catch a glimpse of their future home.

Shortly, we saw what appeared to be at first a great ball of dirty fog off in the distance but as we approached the camp, it turned out to be one big massive dust storm kicked up by the famous Manzanar wind. We were soon engulfed in it and with visibility near zero the buses turned of Highway 395, moved past the guard house and into camp. We never saw the guard towers with mounted machine guns nor the barbed wire fences till the next day although we experienced the probing searchlights that first night. The strong wind picked up rice-sized sand from the construction area and pelted the sides of the buses like buckshot as it made its way past the barracks.

The buses lined up in the middle of a firebreak between blocks 14 and 15 and we were greeted by the earlier arrivals who in spite of the wind were out to see if their friends or relatives were aboard. They were bundled up in a comical array of World War I surplus GI Army uniforms which were issued by the WRA. What a motley looking lot! Like a bunch of refugees, hardly recognizable. In the following weeks we would be there dressed the same as we greeted each new arrival in our stylish "olive drapes" of baggy pants, hanging jackets, wrap around leggings, helmets, goggles and the whole works. Who was it that said "they all look alike?"

After alighting from the bus, we were directed to mess hall #15 to be registered and to be assigned apartments and army blankets. We were assigned apartments according to size of family and couples without children were forced to share apartments with only sheets or bedspreads, makeshift partitions were put up for a minimum of privacy separatin total strangers. This was very embarrassing and degrading situation for most of these unfortunate people. Although we were cramped with six adults in a small room we were of one family which made living endurable. Later as the pieces of the puzzles started to fall in place better arrangement and accomodations were provided for the comforts and the necessities of the residents. Naturally, this did not come about immediately which was par for the course but as time went on, people became hardened to the situation and they themselves went about making living conditions more bearable.

As we will be exposing some of the happenings and the experiences of myself and others, undoubtedly there are and will be other versions of the camp, the life and its views as there are former camp inmates (approx. 110,000). My articles may arouse differences and discrepancies as even my own eyes, left from right, may differ in their observation.

Shiro Nomura, Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

#4A

INSIDE WW 2 MANZANAR, PART 4

The first morning at Manzanar I awoke with a start to the sharp clanging of bells which seemingly came directly from outside our window in the barracks building. The clanging was instantaneously taken up by other bells off in the distance. This was a new experience, with more to come.

Drowsily trying to orient myself to the strange surroundings, I looked around at the sleeping figures that filled the room. Mr parents and I had lined our cots on the west wall, and sleeping against the opposite wall were my nieces Alice and Helen and nephew Tom. The distance between the foot of the cots measured about six feet which gave us ample room to move around. The luggage and duffle bags were piled in disarray in the corner near the entrance like we had left them the night before.

The wind from the previous night had left a film of fine dust over everything. The dust apparently had been blown up through the cracks and the many knotholes in the floor. It even seemed to have penetrated thru the thin layer of tarpaper covering the outer walls of our barracks. The room and its contents resembled a flour mill I had visited back on the farm.

The fuel in the oil stove (the only permanent fixture) had burned itself out sometime during the night and the room was like a cold storage. I was thankful to a young man, Nob Hino, whom I got to know well, who had given an extra blanket to each of my parents and to other aged members of my family the preceding night. It certainly came in handy. We had also hung heavy bath towels on the windows in a futile attempt to ward off the cold and the dust, but to no avail.

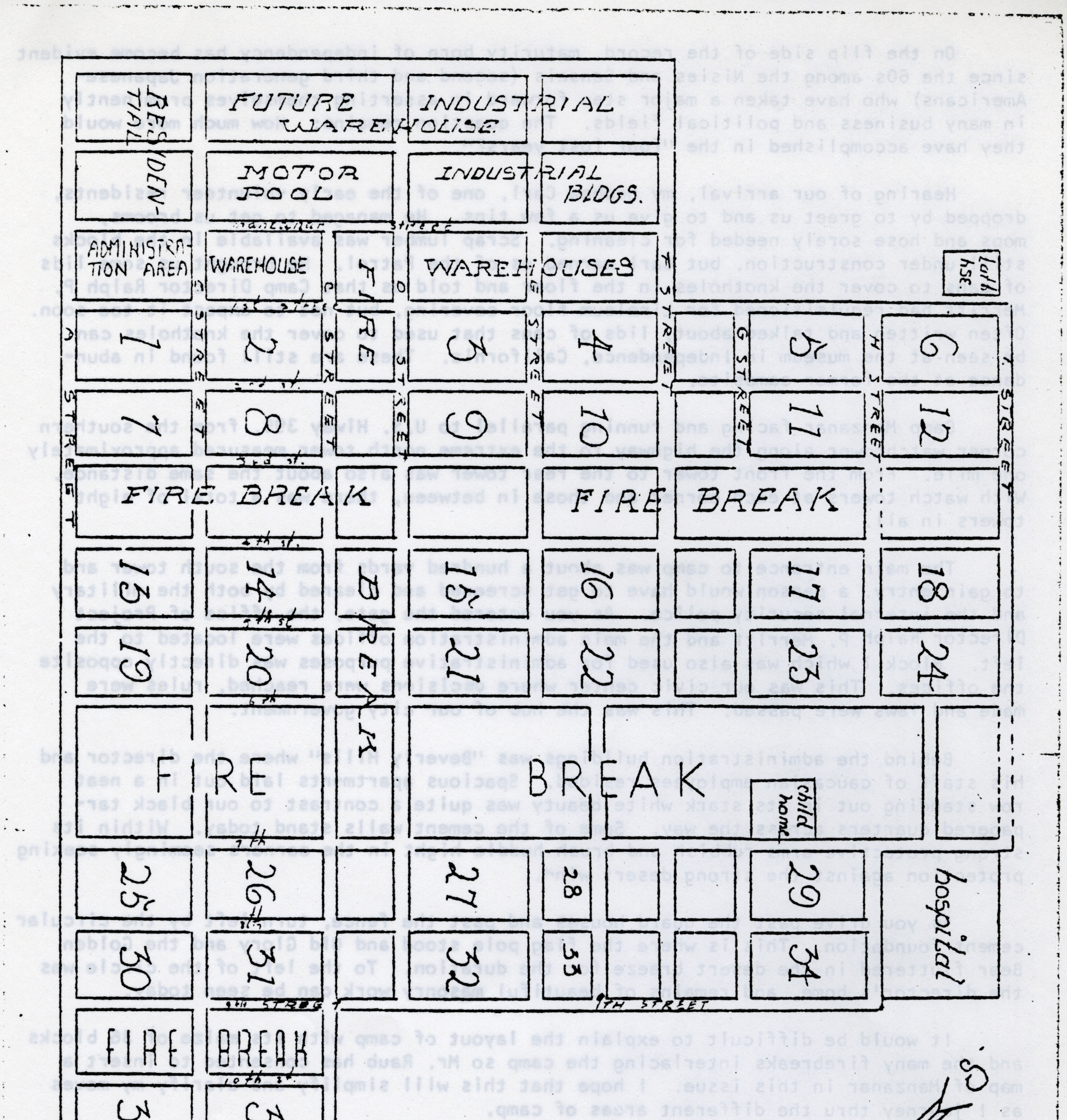
Shivering with cold, I sat on the edge of the metal cot and surveyed the room which was to be our permanent residence for an unknown period of time. The canvas tick stuffed with straw for a mattress was a far cry from the warm comforts and conveniences that we had enjoyed only yesterday. The cruel transition of living habits and lifestyle from a civilized society to this degrading situation was hard to understand. As I looked around the bare room I could see why the room had lost its heat. The 2" X 4" studs hurriedly and unevenly nailed together stared back at me unashamedly in their stark nudity. The widely spaced 1" X 10"s with their countless knotholes and cloak of tarpaper were hardly adequate to keep the cold out.

Thru the open ceiling I could see the many 2" X 4" cross beams stretching across the room. Exposed above the beams were the 1" X 6"s running parallel the length of the roof and covered with heavy duty roofing paper. Our chandelier was a single 100-watt bulb screwed into a chain switch fixture, dangling forlornly and attached to some black and white wires which ran the length of the roof. Beads of tar hung from the ceiling like small tear drops between the loosely nailed boards. I remember chewing those as a kid because I couldn't afford to buy gum. The door was built of flimsy 1" X 4"s and in lieu of door knobs, every door in camp had an identical common latch (on display at Eastern California Museum).

The incessant clanging of the bells soon had the rest of the family stirring. My nieces and nephews upon arising rushed to the window, curious about the noise and eager to get their first view of Manzanar. The bell was a large brake drum hung from the corner of each mess hall and the noisy clanging was the daily call to chow. It was soon to become one of the many familiar sounds of Manzanar. Importantly, it heralded the start of each new day. The bells were also to be rung for emergencies such as an attack from the surrounding villagers, but in view of the increasing population of enemy aliens and the immediate threat that we posed, they must have retreated into the strongholds of Fort Independence.

The first morning to greet us was cold, clear and windless. After hurriedly dressing, I grabbed my towel and toiletries and headed for the latrine. I hadn't really noticed the night before, but the building was divided into two rooms of which the smaller was the shower room with six shower heads and a small dressing area. The main room consisted of eight stools (no partitions) four on each side of a 4 foot wall which housed the plumbing. Lacking in privacy, but a great place to sit and discuss the war. Along the wall near the entrance was the "community wash basin." It was a long metal trough with 4 sets of hot and cold faucets with only two drains. Needless to say, it took a while to get accustomed to this whole new set up.

Amusingly, a large sign in both English and Japanese listing some of the don'ts were posted in each latrine. The one that got me was "DO NOT EXPECTORATE ON THE FLOOR". Not knowing what it meant, I was very careful not to do anything on the floor. I think it was my sister Sadae, the college grad, who clued me in because we had another word for it. I wonder how many fellow inmates understood it.


FUTURE INDUSTRIAL WAREHOUSE
MOTOR POOL
INDUSTRIAL BLDGS
ADMINISTRATION AREA
WAREHOUSE
WAREHOUSES
RESIDENT
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FIRE BREAK
FIRE BREAK
FIRE BREAK
CHILD HOMES
HOSPITAL
1ST STREET
7TH STREET
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MAP of MANZANAR RELOCATION CENTER

After this initial experience, I joined the family for our first breakfast in camp. We laughingly discussed our morning's impressions. In the following weeks we would dine together as a family unit and unlike some of the smaller families or couples, our family numbering 22 members gained the enviable reputation for closeness and being the happiest. I truly looked forward to this moment and this was one of the plusses of camp life for me.

Noticeably, as time went by, families dining together became fewer. The young took to eating separately with friends. To reprimand or discipline was difficult in the close confinement of apartments. To send a child off to bed withour supper was impossible with so many mess halls available. Encountering the daily carefree atmosphere and the independency bred of irresponsibility the rift of the traditional close-knit families started to surface. The crumbling of family ties. Is this where it all started? Did this in any way influence some of the negative effects of the after-years? This was one of the many minuses.

On the flip side of the record, maturity born of independency has become evident since the 60s among the Nisies and Sanseis (second and third generation Japanese-Americans) who have taken a major step forward in asserting themselves prominently in many business and political fields. The question remains: How much more would they have accomplished in the "four lost years?"

Hearing of our arrival, my nephew Carl, one of the early volunteer residents, dropped by to greet us and to give us a few tips. He managed to get us brooms, mops and hose sorely needed for cleaning. Scrap lumber was available in the blocks still under construction, but Carl warned us of the Patrol. He brought us some lids of cans to cover the knotholes in the floor and told us that Camp Director Ralph P. Merritt had requisitioned for Linoleum floor covering, but not to expect it too soon. Often written and talked about, lids of cans that used to cover the knotholes can be seen at the museum in Independence, California. These are still found in abundance at the former campsite.

Camp Manzanar facing and running parallel to U.S. Hiway 395, from the southern corner watchtower along the highway to the extreme north tower measured approximately one mile. From the front tower to the rear tower was also about the same distance. With watch towers at each corner and those in between, there was a total of eight towers in all.

The main entrance to camp was about a hundred yards from the south tower and to gain entry, a person would have to get screened and cleared by both the military and the internal security police. As you entered the gate, the office of Project Director Ralph P. Merritt and the main administration offices were located to the left. Block 1 which was also used for administrative purposes was directly opposite the offices. This was our civic center where decisions were reached, rules were made and laws were passed. This was the hub of our city government.

Behind the administration buildings was "Beverly Hills" where the director and his staff of caucasian employees resided. Spacious apartments laid out in a neat row standing out in its stark white beauty was quite a contrast to our black tar-papered quarters across the way. Some of the cement walls stand today. Within its strong protective arms rubbish and brush huddle hight in the corners seemingly seeking protection against the strong desert wind.

As you drive past the guard houses and past the fence, turn left by the circular cement foundation. This is where the flag pole stood and Old Glory and the Golden Bear fluttered in the desert breeze for the duration. To the left of the circle was the director's home, and remains of beautiful masonry work can be seen today.

It would be difficult to explain the layout of camp with its maize of 36 blocks and the many firebreaks interlacing the camp so Mr. Raub has consented to insert a map of Manzanar in this issue. I hope that this will simplify and clarify my moves as I journey thru the different areas of camp.

To the travelers of U.S. 395 it may only serve as an object of curiosity to those who catch a glimpse of the two stone buildings guarding the entrance to what was once Camp Manzanar. Although they are but shells of their former authority, even after these many years, the sight of it sends a chill down my spine, as they must do to others. These two rock houses, well-preserved over the 32 years, still stand as a mocking reminder to an injustice of so many years ago. These sturdy structures which can be seen while traveling on 395 serve only as a visible reminder to those who know.

Shiro Nomura, Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

NOMURA'S MANZANAR SAGA EVOKES WARM PLAUDITS

Newsy Ridgecrest Daily Independent published Shi Nomura's Manzanar article for November Inyo Museums News Bulletin along with choice photos taken by their photographer Wilson. The almost full-page feature appeared December 6, 1974. Countless enthusiastic and favorable comments came to the attention of the Inyo Museums Bulletin staff by letter and word of mouth regarding Nomura's candid reporting of the Manzanar scene during WW II. A large number of subscriptions to the Bulletin are by persons interested in the Manzanar incident. The first four chapters of Nomura's chronicle point to considerable merit in use of his story as basis for a television or movie documentary. In fact, the Museums Department plan is to issue his complete serial as a book when it concludes.

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Many thanks to all those who sent Christmas and Season cards to Eastern California Museum.

#5

SHIRO MAKES SOME PLEASANT AND SOME UNHAPPY ADJUSTMENTS

Inside World War 2 Manzanar, Part 5
By Shiro Nomura, Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

Following the initial shock of evacuation and with the heavy cloak of uncertainty slowly lifting, a surprising transformation of moods and attitudes became noticeable. The passing of each day lessened the caged feeling and was soon replaced by a strange sense of freedom, in spite of knowing we were fenced in. A feeling of complete freedom from responsibility that was a major relief for many who were spared from scratching out a living in a very competitive society.

I remember a great number of college graduates faced with limited job opportunities working in my sister's produce market in Van Nuys prior to WW II. Highly qualified specialists in their fields, engineers, teachers, et cetera, armed with adequate credentials found it difficult to compete in the strict, white dominated fields. They had very little choice but to seek employment in lesser capacities. Sadly, this breed had been born a score of years too early. A popular quote from the late thirties, "A Nisei (second generation Japanese) had to be a college grad to get a job in a produce market."

Throughout the various camps "these men and women" with their knowledge, training and adaptability, proved themselves invaluable in effecting the solidarity in education and, importantly, in the forming of self-government in the early formative months. Looking back, I wish I had something to contribute.

The general feeling of the younger people who had taken the "What the Hell" attitude lessened to some degree during the ensuing days. Born of hopelessness, or perhaps it was because of my many new found friends, I also found myself looking less and less to "The Fence" and "The Beyond." The barbed wire fence, a common sight to the cattle ranchers in that area and the many travelers of US 395 of that era, became less a bond - but a way of life. You can corral my body - control my movements - but not my spirit. This was very evident in the sights and sounds of an average day in Manzanar.

The forced separation of families and loved ones who were sent to the many camps in the various states created hardships and heartaches. The choice was not ours - there were no alternatives. I would be experiencing many lonely days in the weeks to come. The unexpected turn of events which brought our family to Manzanar, destroyed my plans to meet "a special someone" who had entered the Santa Anita Assembly Center ahead of me. With no means of communication, the rerouting of our district was not posted till a later date. I heard later, she had waited many days at the gate for the bus that never came.

Meanwhile in Manzanar, as the new blocks would be completed and opened for occupancy, busloads from the Santa Anita Assembly Center would arrive and I would be there to meet each arrival faithfully. I would stand on the outskirts of the huge crowd inconspicuously and scan the new faces for that one familiar one. Time and again, my hopes would be dashed to the ground and blown away with the fickle desert sand.

With the many blocks yet to be completed, there was still hope, and as each block was opened for occupancy, my unwavering hope would be rekindled anew. I looked upon the movement of the various districts at Santa Anita A. C. as something akin to a giant chess game. The many states with their camps was "the board." the numerous districts in the Assembly Center were "the pieces" and the W. R. A. brass would make "the moves." We were completely at their mercy.

On one of these arrival days, a resident who had been gathering scrap lumber in an area which was still under construction, was shot by an Army guard. Returning with an armload of "scrap pieces," he evidentally did not understand nor hear the order to halt and was shot as he advanced towards the guard. The victim and the guard were removed immediately to avoid a confrontation with the group waiting for the buses. The bullet wound proved to be superficial and the immediate action by the internal security department (manned by camp personnel) prevented a major issue. It's amazing and uncanny how much and how fast the officials can cloak an unsavory incident. I'd also like to mention how fast I lost interest in carpentry.

Many long and lonesome nights were spent around our only source of warmth, the oil stove. A group of young people would gather at our apartment every night and we would sit around the stove and exchange stories of our lives as experienced on the outside. While our white, brown, black or green counterparts in the outside world were having their "juke-box sessions" with burgers and malts, we enjoyed the luxury of bread and jam "borrowed" from the mess hall. We would toast the bread on the stove and with water boiled in a tin gallon can we would make hot chocolate with cocoa powder that we had begged off the chef. Although we lacked in facilities and materials, it took nothing away from our nightly meetings. We ingredients. "FRIENDSHIP."

The block 8 food canteen was a good source for snack goods but importantly, it took money to purchase them. With none of our group working, we would pool our finances for rare treats at our nightly gatherings. I never realized there were so many off-brand products on the market. Favorites like Coca Cola, Pepsi, Wrigley's, Dentyne, Babe Ruth, Love Nest, Lucky Strike, Camels, a cold can of Acme or Eastside Beer would have been a real treasure to own. Our soft drink was a LaVida brand. Chelsa was the cigarette and some of the candies and gum are off the market today. One gum in particular was a good candy. If the chewer wasn't careful, he would have half of it swallowed before he could wad it up enough to be chewable.

As I became friendly with the chef of our block, sophisticated extras like butter and sugar with an occassional treat of weiners and eggs graced our evening snacks. A used tea kettle replaced the old gallon can (which started to show signs of rust) and with tea and coffee, my family and the boys would have a private party every night. We soon had to move to the block 21-15 recreation room as our apartment could no longer accommodate the group as it grew larger with each meeting. With a borrowed record player and a treasured collection of the pre-war "78" hit records, we would sit around for hours listening to Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw, Les Brown, Benny Goodman and the Dorsey Brothers.

The immediate popularity of these music sessions prompted a bigger production when Henry Ushijima asked the consent of the WRA authorities to have his stored equipment and records shipped into camp. Soon, emanating from the block 22-15 recreation hall was the most beautiful music ever heard in the Owens Valley. (I can picture the valley residents with hands clapped over their ears.) With Henry's superb collection of priceless classical and popular records and with his powerful loudspeakers strategically placed, he virtually transformed the fire break between blocks 22-23 into a huge outdoor theater. This was our "Concert Under The Stars."

The music attracted the old as well as the young and with no other programs planned for the residents in the early days in Manzanar, the concert was an instant hit. It was especially welcomed by young couples lacking in privacy in the close confinement of small apartments, and the prying eyes of their nosey neighbors. It was a common sight to see couples huddled together in the sand with an old Army blanket draped over their shoulders enjoying the music and the privacy. Immediately to the west of the building stood a huge cottonwood tree which still stands today towering over the neighboring pear orchard and majestically marking the spot of one of our Happenings. I spent many lonely nights listening to the music while leaning on that very tree. Did my tears or those of countless others have any effect on the growth of that tree?

As the many weeks passed and the remaining blocks rapidly filled up, my vigil seemed utterly hopeless. Kow Maruki proved to be a true friend during my ordeal and his constant companionship and his optimistic outlook saw me through those trying days. When the final blocks 35 & 36 were readied for occupancy, I knew that the end was in sight.

Rumors! Rumors! Rumors! The camps were a nest of rumors. Understandably, the people in the various camps were influenced and sometimes motivated by rumors. We ate by the rumors. We were clothed by the rumors and we even slept on the rumors. Almost every day we would get rumors of a mess hall in another block having meat or something "special." We'd rush over. "SOS" (same old slop)....We would hear of new clothing being issued...."GI hand-me-downs." I was sick and tired of the smell of hay in our mattresses. It reminded me too much of our hay barn (tough on Hay Fever). We were elated at the news of real mattresses on the way. "Yeah, via wagon train from the east coast." These were but a few of the rumors that circulated the camps. The guilty source? "WISHFUL THINKING." This was the way of life in camp.

Reportedly, or it was rumored that the last contingent from Santa Anita was from the district I had been waiting for. I rushed down with Kow in time to see the blue and white Greyhound buses with the many inquisitive faces looking out the window, pull into place in the fire break between blocks 30-35.......As I watched the last of the buses being emptied I slowly realized that the curtain was drawing close on the many torturing weeks of waiting. The tearful faces of those who had hopefully waited are etched on my mind and the shrieks and happy shouts of families and loved ones being reunited still ring in my ears. Unfortunately, there had been many like myself who were denied this "magic occasion."

Casting a final glance at this scene of mixed emotions, I dejectedly shoved another one of those "DAMNED RUMORS" in my hip pocket and with Kow's understanding hand on my shoulder we trudged our way back to our block 21 through the "DAMNED SAND."

Later, received a letter from block K8, Camp Amache, Colorado. In short, "It's desolate... I miss you......." Love, Amy....

#6

RICH MAN, POOR MAN, BEGGAR MAN, THIEF, DOCTOR, LAWYER, MERCHANT, CHIEF.

6

Inside World War 2 Manzanar, Part 3

By Shiro Nomura, Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

From all walks of life...American citizens sentenced without trial. Crime? Parental ancestry...Term of sentence? Unknown...Future? Uncertain...Their reason? Multiple...Forced from their homes, issued numbers and sent off to concentration camps throughout the United States. One of such camps, and the first one, was

MANZANAR RELOCATION CENTER
OWENS VALLEY, INYO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA.
SPRING OF 1942.

As the weeks went by, we became acclimated to the bitter cold of the mornings and nights, but enjoyed the comfortable warmth of the day. We even experienced some hot windless days which was indicative of the hot summer months ahead. We were forced to seek relief in the shade of the large cottonwood trees which are found in abundance near the rear of camp.

The wind is a constant thing which we learned to put up with. An early morning zephyr works itself into a full-blown gale by late afternoon. In fact one afternoon a small cyclone which was first sighted near block 6 in the southwest corner of camp zig-zagged diagonally towards our block, but ripped the roof off the men's latrine in block 15 across the street from us. A couple of men were temporarily inconvenienced until the emergency crew cleared the area of live wires. A couple of the barracks were lightly damaged by the flying roof but fortunately there were no casualties.

With the constant watering of the areas surrounding the barracks the dust which had been a major problem with each wind storm was held down to a minmum. Most apartments by now had most of the knot holes covered with lids from tin cans and the cracks in the floors and walls stuffed with rags or newspaper. We heard rumors of a camp requisition for plaster boards to line the interior of our apartment. What a relief that would be from the cold and the heat. Still another rumor. We heard that the linoleum crew was laying linoleum in the low numbered blocks and we checked this out to be true. However, they were moving at a snail's pace and seemed to be in no particular hurry. Maybe I knew someone in the crew. I would go take a look.

The linoleum crew was controlled by a group of boys from Terminal Island whose families had suffered the most harsh and unfair demands of a government upon the Japanese people. They had been faced with a 48-hour eviction deadline, and were the first of any group of Japanese ancestry to be uprooted and forced from their homes. Terminal Island had immediately come under rigid patrol and strict surveillance soon after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. It seems that Terminal Island and its people had been spied upon by the U. S. Government even months before the actual bombing. The Terminal Island Japanese have been long noted for their compact fishing industry and according to a Mr. Shigekawa, a former Terminal Islander, their boats were confiscated and docked and have yet to receive a penny in restitution for their losses.

Terminal Islanders were obviously mad at the world. What can you accomplish in 48 hours?

I heard of their dilemma on the second and final day. I took our stake truck and was able to move out two families before the deadline of midnight. The island was a scene of utter confusion and pandemonium. Cars, trucks of all sizes and shapes, trailers and even horse-drawn wagons. It's a wonder the island didn't sink from all the weight. Men yelling, women and children crying and above the din and confusion the "city vultures" in their huge furniture vans, bartering and bargaining for the expensive appliances and furniture purposely being broken up before their eyes by the people rather than take a paltry buck or two.

I helped clean out Kiyoshi's Music Store of his personal belongings and as a couple of men watched, Kiyoshi and I smashed all of his records except for one box full which he told me to keep. An offer of ten dollars for each of his glass cases fell on deaf ears as we continued to demolish everything of value. Next door at Yoshioka's Cafe, we could make out sounds through the wall indicating that "renovation" was also in progress there. As a final gesture Kiyoshi picked up a block of wood and hurled it through the plate glass window. Who was that block of wood meant for? Roosevelt? Dewitt? America? Fate? I'll never know. That block of wood lay among the fragments of his life's investment.

It turned out that I knew a few of the boys on the linoleum crew and it hastened the schedule for our block and also gave us a choice of color (Black or Brick Red). They cut out a pattern for our double-door entrance and it gave the apartment a very homey look. It did pay to know someone on the inside. Talked to Shig Nakaji (Terminal Islander) about the attitude of the boys from Terminal Island and I found that they carried a chip on their shoulder the size of a log for the treatment that they had received. Reports were that they had been making life miserable for some of the camp residents. They were taking their feelings of anger and bitterness out on their own people. They would have to be made to realize that we were not here by choice but by the same order that governed their move.

Now, this is important. Seldom mentioned in any of the articles that I have read was that prior to the deadline posted for evacuating the Western Defense Zone, we had been given the opportunity of pulling stakes and relocating into the interior states outside of the W[illegible]. The choice was to be a pioneer and to blaze a trail or to be part of the herd, to go where we were led. What'll it be, "a rap on the knuckles or a swat on the butt." Again, the fear of the unknown.

A friend, Ken Yamagawa and his family accepted the challenge and took a giant step. From a hotel in Los Angeles to farming in Littleton, Colorado. Acceptance in Colorado was tolerable. Exiting through some of the small towns in California, intolerable. "A great experience," he says.

We look back at a particular experience in camp and refer to it as the "Diarrhea Epidemic of '42." A few months had passed and we had reluctantly settled down to a day-by-day existence. What had started out in the afternoon as a minor stomach disorder among a few developed into a major problem of catastrophic proportions. Some called it a malady while others placed the blame on tainted food. Some were accusing their block chef not realizing that the discomforts had almost engulfed the entire camp. By nightfall, and all through the night, there was a constant stream of people wearing a path to the comfort stations. I had mentioned in an earlier issue that the men's latrine had eight stools but the ladies were luckier as they had ten. Hardly enough in such an emergency. Some of the severe cases affecting the young and the aged were hospitalized.

What a nightmare. What a mess! Fear was raised when someone mentioned without real cause that the drinking water in the reservoir was poisoned. Rumor mongers jumped on this latest bit of gossip and soon the word had spread throughout the camp: "Don't drink the water." Panic necessitated the doubling of the reservoir guards, but it was like sounding the alarm after the fire had burned itself out. Chemically analyzing the water it was proven that the latest rumor was unfounded and that the water was perfectly safe to drink but the residents remained leery for some time. Yes, I believe that many of the former camp residents remember that painful experience.

The reservoir is located about two miles west of U.S. 395 directly behind the former campsite and is not visible to the travelers of the highway. In recent years the reservoir has been turned into a popular desert spa and frequented by the "Ladies of the Valley." The sign now reads, "Dirty Water - Don't Drink."

#7

MANZANAR EXPANDS WITH NEW ARRIVALS

Inside WW 2 Manzanar, Part 7, By Shiro Nomura,
Inyo Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

A badly crumpled package and three delayed letters from Amy in one day's mail. Adding to the loneliness of being kept apart, a day or two passing by without mail was torturous. A very disturbing thing about the U.S. Mail was their inconsistent deliveries. A fat pony express rider on a three-legged pony would have kept a better schedule than the mail trucks of those days. I wonder if the system has changed much today.

I finished opening the package that the post office has started. A snip of the scissors and the sadly man-handled package split open to expose a green, heavy woolen sleeveless sweater. A slip-on style with a chain-stitch pattern and big or small, I was determined to wear it. A note that accompanied the sweater read, "Finally finished your sweater...I hope it fits...to keep you warm till we're together... " Love, Amy. I was floating on a cloud high above the Sierras for many days to come.

Following shortly on the heels of the evacuee volunteers to Manzanar, the first evacuee family units to be admitted to the camp had been a small group out of Bainbridge Island in Washington from the Pacific Northwest. The cold winds of the early spring which blew through the Owens Valley was hardly a challenge to those hardy strawberry growers who were conditioned to the adverse weather in Washington. Although they did find the sand and gravel kicked up by the strong desert wind a new experience and a little "hard to swallow."

Compounding the discomforts which the first family groups encountered, were the inconvenience of crowded living quarters in partially finished barracks. The unfinished sewer systems created additional woes to a bad situation especially for the women. Many additional portable comfort shacks like those used on construction sites were moved in and the area was soon reminiscent of the many "Hoover Cities" which sprang up during the Depression years. Due to some bad decisions made by the "playmakers" in the White House, this unfortunate group from Bainbridge had been moved in too soon.

With the grounds dug up and construction going on in Block 3 through Block 12, the slightest wind would kick up a choking cloud of dust. Construction of the barracks was understandably delayed and running behind schedule as all work would be disrupted during the daily afternoon windstorms. As the sewer system in each block was completed, the portable comfort stations would be moved to the next construction site. Notices would be posted on each of these comfort stations to be moved. An amusing incident which involved an older Bainbridge woman that couldn't read, who found herself airborne and loaded on the bed of a huge stake truck. She probably thought that she was sitting out an earthquake. She nearly fainted as she stepped out to see an equally startled truck driver and found herself a star on center stage. But I guess everything came out all right.

The evacuees from the San Fernando Valley had followed the Bainbridge group into camp. Fortunately, by the time this group arrived, conditions had improved some, although they also experienced crowded facilities and makeshift mess halls. Kitchen conditions must have been atrocious in the earlier days as the San Fernando mess hall in Block 4 had the notorious distinction of being labeled the "Diarrhea Kitchen" of Manzanar.

As additional manpower was made available, many of them were recruited for the construction of the much needed barracks. Needless to say, the construction progressed at a much faster pace. With the development of the Department of Housing, the appointed evacuee housing coordinator labored to alleviate the crowded conditions and to see to the needs of the residents. The families with children had priority. By the time our group entered camp in May of '42, much of the wrinkles had been ironed out and the camp was functioning like a "Mini-City." We were spared some of the discomforts of "growing pains."

By the summer of '42, farm areas had been designated southwest of camp and 300-400 acres were soon cleared of brush and rocks and under professional farm supervision. Once again the rattlesnake crew was activated to keep the area safe for the farm workers. Occasionally a snake or two would be sighted within the barbed wire compound (they didn't require passes), but I don't recall an incident involving a rattler. We did run into scorpions often during the first summer in camp. My sister in the next barrack found found a scorpion in one of her children's shoes. Of course, with my sister, her husband and ten children, there were twelve pairs of shoes on the floor. I guess the odds were against her.

With modern farm equipment of that era which was made available by the camp director Ralph P. Merritt, the evacuee farm workers had transformed the dry brush strewn wasteland into a productive plush farmland by late summer. Soon the camp residents were enjoying the "fruits of their labor" with home grown vegetables gracing the mess hall tables of all 36 blocks. The quality of the products grown in the valley would have made the farmers back home envious. The surplus crops were shipped to other camps and also to the neighboring towns around Manzanar. A chicken farm and also a hog farm (raised on the camp's garbage) were soon started to supplement the needs of the camp mess halls. This was just a part of the camp enterprises which must have saved the government and taxpayers countless thousands of dollars due to some of the camp's self supporting system in the years of our internment. Yes, I will agree that they were a productive group.

Knitting was a popular pastime among the women folk in camp and it was soon a common sight to see a group of women, young and old, chatting and knitting in the warm desert sun. As was the custom, the menfolk had either applied for various jobs or had taken up hobbies of painting or craftwork some of which are slowly making appearances in the Manzanar Camp Display in the Eastern California Museum. Few of the women signed up for work in the mess halls while the mothers looked after their smaller children, although the blocks and the camp itself was like one big nursery school. There was hardly a need for a baby sitter. Later, the camp mattress factory and the garment factories offered employment for the women of the camp. Earlier, a few women had answered the call for "stoop laborers" on the farm. I guess it's about time I looked for a job too.

Seeing a group of so-called "toughs" from Terminal Island sitting around knitting one day prompted me to ask the aid of my mother in knitting a pair of socks for Amy. In spite of many jibes and raised eyebrows, after knitting and purling for many nights during our nightly toast and chocolate bull sessions I fanally finished the "ah...er... socks." I must have made one for the left foot and the other for the right foot 'cuz they didn't match. I could only hope that one of her feet was bigger than the other. This was truly a "Labor of Love."

Received a letter from a dear friend in Wilmington, California, a Mrs. Ruby E. McFarland. She writes that the harbor area has changed considerably and it brings tears to her eyes whenever she drives through the once familiar neighborhood where "her families" (Japanese-American friends) used to live. The well-kept yards were in sad neglect and especially the neat farms where we had toiled from dawn to dusk were now hopelessly in weeds. Many of the abandoned farms were taken over by inexperienced hands who soon found out that there was a lot more to farming than just harvesting mouth-watering crops. Realizing after a few months that "stoop labor farming" was not their "bushel of peas," many of them took or sold anything of value and set out for places unknown. Vagabonds!

Most of the losses were in equipments and personal properties as many of the farms in the 1930's were only leased or rented due to the Alien Land Law of 1913 preventing the Issei Japanese (First Generation) from purchasing land or real property. Most families were waiting for their children to come of age to purchase property in their names. Such was the situation that slipped by us because of the subsequent evacuation order. We were in the midst of negotiating for a piece of farmland and I'm sure we would have lost the down payment. Fortunate, you might say, but the real fortunate ones were those who had purchased land prior to the war and were able to resume farming upon their return.

Mrs. McFarland also wrote that she had requested and received permission to visit her friends in the Santa Anita Assembly Center. She had found the grandstand and the track area beautifuly landscaped but the living quarters, the hastily remodeled stables were simply deplorable. The huge grandstands had been opened to the evacuees and many concerts and dances were held there. She had also written to tell me that she met many of our mutual friends and she goes on to say, "I talked to Amy and she told me how lonely she was and wishes she were in Manzanar with you." That made two of us.

Handsome, grand and genuine. Mrs. McFarland affectionately known to us as "Obasan McFarland" (an older lady) had been a true friend to the Japanese families in the Harbor area. I wish more mention had been made of the wonderful people like her through out the West Coast that had gone to the aid of their friends. As the eviction deadline neared in the different districts, she was rushing from family to family offering her physical and moral aid. I'll never forget what she had meant to all of us. Indeed, she was an "Angel of Mercy."

She closes her letter with "P.S....I plan to visit Manzanar in the very near future. Please make arrangements. Hope to have a surprise for you."

I wonder if she's planning to sneak Amy into Manzanar in the trunk of her car? Impossible! Only wishful thinking.

EXPLANATION

The Inyo Museums News Bulletin is late this month because it had a bad case of the flu.

#8

SHIRO DROPS POKER AND PINOCHLE AND GOES TO WORK

Inside WW 2 Manzanar, Part 8, By Shiro Nomura,
Inyo Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

Unable to curb an unsatiable appetite for snacks and goodies found at the food canteen, my friend Kow and I finally realized the need for more spending money. We had tried our hands at poker and pinochle but when the luck runs sour we'd find ourselves in a worse situation. We had been offered jobs and there were bulletins posted on the kitchen walls asking for able-bodied men to go to work, but coming from the hectic "outside-world" we just enjoyed the slow-paced existence of camp life. There were no immediate worries of tomorrow, the food, (such as it was) or a place to sleep.

The government had set up a four-bracket pay system and we had turned down jobs which would have immediately placed us in the third bracket but as long as our pockets "jingle jangle jingled" we were taking advantage of the U.S. Government's "all expense" paid vacation. This exclusive desert hideaway (membership only) conspicuously lacked some of the fringe facilities such as an 18-hole golf course, (later developed a 9-hole course in Summer '43) the poolside cocktail parties with scantily-clad long legged lovelies lolling about and the choice of entree at dinnertime. But of course we could learn to get along without the golf course and the choice of foods.

In our four-bracket pay system the fourth and the ultimate top was reserved for our professional group including doctors, dentists and all department heads and foremen. Based on an 8-hour work day and a 40-hour week, our regular work days would be normal in all respect with the outside of the barbed wire world except for one small detail. "The paycheck."

The bottom rung of our four-level pay system started at 8 dollars. The second bracke which was considerably more, was paid to all apprentice workers and at 12 dollars. It was quite a jump from the first. The journeymen wage was a fixed 16 dollars and the absolute end of the road for the average worker like myself. Chances of becoming a department head to enjoy the benefits of the top salary or 19 dollars was very remote as there just wasn't enough departments to become the head of. I don't wish to take away credit to those "heads" that truly deserved their position through merit, but a lot of it was camp politic The doctors and dentists were limited to the allowable ceiling of 19 dollars, and I feel that some of them deserved more. To set the whole pay system in its right perspective I will state here that these figures were not, and reiterate, were not hourly wages as some of you may have thought. Nor were they daily wages. Nor were they weekly wages but, yes, this was our monthly salary. I often think back that the camps would have been "ripe pickins" for a strong labor union.

Although there were rumors of small labor unions in camp such as the kitchen workers union these were isolated cases for as a rule it was extremely difficult to arouse the camp resident to form a group of this type. There were small groups of dissidents which normally are found in a large concentration of people such as this, but we paid little attention to them as "our horn rimmed glasses couldn't see eye to eye." The only disturbance concerning wage disagreement was related to me by a friend Bob Uyemori who as a student worker had applied to work in the U.S. Government Camouflage Net Project which was located behind the warehouse area south of Block 3.

The camouflage net project was started in the summer of '42 and began making nets in spite of minor protests from some of the residents. At the peak of the protests picket lines surrounded the area until order could be restored by the camp security police. One of the important issues of the striking force emphasized the health factor. To make the camouflage nets large rolls of webbings or nets had been hung on huge frames and chemicall dyed strips of green, beige and brown burlap were interwoven into the heavy mesh. Certain precautionary measures were observed such as wearing goggles and gauze breathing masks but in spite of this many of the workers coming in contact with the dye and the burlap were hospitalized. Former hospital worker Mae Kakehashi states that it was pitiful and frightening to see so many camouflage workers being admitted to the hospital. My niece Helen was hospitalized for a month and luckily was not one of the fatal cases which had been reported, but suffered recurring rashes for a number of years after.

One other reason voiced by the opposition force was, why were the prisoners of the U.S. Government involved in a project endangering their health and life making camouflage nets to protect the sons of those responsible for our bing behind barbed wire fences. Ironically, while they spewed verbal damage to our reputation, we were involved in making camouflage nettings to protect their loved ones. Really didn't make much sense, yet this project was carried on in several other camps with the same dissension being voiced by a protestsing force in each camp.

The wage dispute as related to me by Bob concerned the 8 dollar minimum paid to the school age workers. They felt that while working under the same hazardous conditions as the adults, they were entitled to the same rate of pay. Meeting with the heads of the department resulted in an agreeable settlement and an immediate increase in pay was agreed upon. Don't you agree that to risk one's health and life is surely worth at least 12 dollars per month? I suspect that this incident as minor as it was or as major as it could have been, it was instrumental in the elimination of the 8 dollar minimum wage scale.

My friend Kow got a job driving the camp mail truck (within the boundaries of camp of course). The post office was located at the west end of the administration district and it was one of the busiest departments in whole camp. The flow of mail and parcels through this department was mountainous and possible handled more volume of incoming and outgoing services than all of the outlying towns in the Owens Valley combined. His job was to deliver mail twice daily to the block manager's office in each of the 36 blocks and in the interim he would be sorting mail with the rest of the crew. Now, with Kow working at the post office, I should receive my mail early and possibly have it delivered special delivery.

The bulk of the parcels were coming in from the Sears Roebuck mail order department. Some of the residents had sent for the Sears catalog and the first few that were received were passed selectively and so preciously from hand to hand. I will vouch that not a single page ever saw the inside of an out house. The combined purchases through the Sears catalog by the residents of the various camps must have totaled in the millions of dollars. It was through this new purchasing medium that some of the luxuries and comforts of home were made available. With the necessary tools now made available sophisticated furniture pieces and closets and cupboards and other improvements were observed in some of the apartments. I never realized until my experience in Manzanar how talented and resourceful the Japanese people as a race were and it makes me feel proud to be a small part of another of their finer traits. Yes, Sears Roebuck and Co. played an important role in the lives of the camp residents.

My nephew Carl had set up a job interview for me as a timekeeper and I was to meet with a Mr. Arthur Sandridge who was the head of the Public Works Department. The office was located across from the main administration building and the whole area around the office was always busy in the morning. Being the nerve center of all maintenance and construction work in camp, different crews in their familiar blue panel trucks would line the length of the block while waiting for their respective foreman to receive their orders for the day.

Inside the office behind the receptionist's desk were five or six desks with everyone busily at work. One side of the wall was covered with mimeographed bulletins and clip boards and also a large detailed map of the whole camp and its various functions. Mr. Arthur M. Sandridge and two other Caucasian workers sat at the back of the room busily going over charts with the different crew foremen.

There is a name plate from the Public Works office with signatures of all employees on display in the Manzanar Section of the Eastern California Museum in Independence. The name plate belonged to Mary Kageyama, a receptionist and file clerk for the department and whose name will appear from time to time in the following issues.

The interview with Mr. Sandridge was short and to the point. He turned to the map and showed me the locations of all of the boilers in our camp including the new large hospital complex which was possibly the largest facility in the whole valley. There was also a separate complex for the Shonien (Japanese orphanage) sponsored and operated by the Maryknoll Church of Los Angeles. I selfishly envied them for being able to live together among their own age group not fully realizing that after the fun of the day was over how lonely the nights must have been for them.

In each block (36) there was a man on duty tending the boilers and it was my job to clock and sign them in. I was to make two rounds each day, in the A.M. and the P.M. This meant miles and miles of walking. I was soon to find out that the 16 dollars a month did not pay for the shoes that I wore out. No wonder this timekeeper's job was up for grabs. I would have quit after a week of trudging through the desert sand, burning to a crisp under the hot sun and hoping that the wind would not come up, but the job became more interesting each day. The postman always rings twice. This timekeeper rang twice too. More about my interesting route in the next issue.

As promised, Mrs. Ruby E. McFarland made her surprise visit. She drove up to our block one afternoon and as I saw her white Buick drive into our block I nearly stumbled as I ran to greet her when I saw a dark haired girl sitting in the passenger seat. She honked a couple of times trying to get my adrenelin flowing I guessed, but there was no need for that. "She did it," I thought, "How did she manage it?" Yes, there was a girl in the car, a Japanese girl, but not my Amy. Father Laverly of the Maryknoll Church in Los Angeles had asked her to bring this young lady to the Shonien in Manzanar. After spending the afternoon with my family and sharing our dinner in the mess hall, she left to spend the night at the Schaefer's Winnedumah Hotel in Independence. The surprise?...A couple of bags (inspected at the gate) of goodies from the outside world...A slight let down but it was worth it in the presence of one Mrs. Ruby McFarland.

EXOTIC FOODS, LIVE PEEP SHOWS AND HEARTRENDING SADNESS

Inside WW 2 Manzanar, Part 9, By Shiro Nomura
Inyo Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

Rain or shine, the faithful mess hall bells would simultaneously ring out in an orchestra of 36 bells which heralded the start of a new day and the call to breakfast. The lonely hollow sound would roll like waves, echoing and re-echoing through the still desert valley air and finally waining into silence up the craggy slopes of the majestic Sierra. Repeated again for lunch and for our evening dinner call, but somehow the clanging of the bells did not have the same effect. The melancholy lonely sounds of the morning bells I can still remember as some of the melancholy sounds of Camp Manzanar.

The early risers would slowly make their way to the mess hall for an eye-opening shot of caffeine, toast and scrambled eggs. Bacon and ham to us was a magazine ad. Sometimes we would get fried potatoes, or when rice was left over because of a lousy dinner the night before, we would get a treat of fried rice. French toast was a common sight for breakfast and for a Sunday treat we would occasionally get hot cakes with real Log Cabin Syrup in the original Log Cabin tin. Fresh milk was of short supply and was only available to the very young or those with special permits from the camp doctors.

Food on the whole had improved. It was anyone's guess whether the cooks had improved or were we finally getting used to the SOS (same old slop). If you can picture in your mind a plate with a mound of hot rice topped with a huge ladle of hot steaming stew. Great! But on the side of the rice, a large spoonful of juicy cold slaw and on the other side a much too generous serving of ice cold lime jello. Really a well balanced diet. The top half of the serving, if eaten rapidly was very enjoyable, but strange things would be transpiring from the juice level down. The carrots would taste like lime and the potatoes would strangely taste like sour dressing. The slaw would be floating around in the liquified jello which had turned the gravy into a greenish brown slush. The rice by now was multicolored and multi-flavored. Seconds anyone?

We all dreaded Friday dinners. The great white fathers had imposed a blanket menu of the traditional fish or seafood of some variety for each Friday throughout the camp. The quality of fish shipped into camp was bad. Originally earmarked for the fish meal fertilizer plant, the shipments somehow would find its way into our camp. To describe it in a few choice words, "it stunk and tasted like hell." In spite of the fact that foods of the sea were a popular diet of the Japanese people and those of the Catholic Faith, they, too, would dread the coming of Fridays. I would theorize that most of the younger generation's dislike for seafoods started in the camps.

Fresh fruits of any variety were a rare sight in camp and sometimes sold in the canteen with other hard-to-get treats such as ice cream and pastries. Limited supplies would curtail wide distribution. First come, first served, word by grapevine and many did without. Oranges which were abundant in Southern California in the forties were often passed out in the mess halls. Apples in season would also be distributed to the residents. Pears from the small Manzanar orchard located in the firebreak between blocks 23 and 29 were served once a year. Perhaps, if we hadn't pulled our midnight "pear raids," there might have been more to go around. Just how many worms, which made their homes in those pears that we had eaten during the dark of the moon I'll never know.

The pear and apple orchards in Manzanar date back to the early 1900s when the former holdings of the John Shephard family were sold to the Chaffee Improvement Co. in 1905. The property was divided into 5, 10 and 20-acre plots and sold for domestic farming and orchards. The Chaffee Co. named the area Manzanar, meaning red apple (Maiden's Blush) and named after the orchards which consisted mainly of apples. In recent years the residents of the Owens Valley share in the harvest of the fruits. If a little love and care is returned to the source in return for the yield that is taken, the trees should bear fruit for many years to come.

Good food and plenty of it was essential to me on my new job as timekeeper for the boiler workers. I required miles of walking each day, and for extra nourishment I would schedule my route so I would be in the food canteen area between meals. The job turned out to be a far cry from the one I had imagined. I expected to be seated at a desk with a cute little secretary at my side and clock the boiler tenders as they reported to me. Huh! What a dreamer.

Being exposed to the hot desert sun each day bronzed me up real good. The heat was tolerable but the afternoon winds would blow relentlessly making my afternoon run miserable The timekeeper before me apparently didn't make the second round regularly as the boiler workers were hardly ever around. I looked foward to my morning round as the weather would usually be ideal for the people to be out so I could socialize with them. I never realized there were so many cute girls around which made my work more enjoyable. I would try to write to my Amy in Camp Amache in Colorado every night but I would also look to my morning visits. The cliche "out of sight - out of mind" could have originated there.

I would find evidence of strange happenings in some of the boiler rooms which I checked out each day. The boiler rooms, which maintained an even temperature throughout the chilly nights, was an ideal hangout for secret bull sessions, poker or crap games. Gambling which must have been one of camp's national nocturnal pastimes was usually available to anyone with a little loose change. I often found pop bottles and chip bags indicating that a small party had been in progress. Alcoholic beverages which were taboo in the early days of camp didn't stop the flow of a little contraband sneaking into camp. I would find the containers of Eastside or Lucky Lager beers or an occasional empty whiskey bottle proving that tight security was not always imposed upon the few in envious positions. Later, we too were able to have "beer busts" at Bairs Creek late into the night with all the trimmings - and girls too.

Sometimes there would be evidence of someone having spent the whole night in the cramped quarters of the boiler room. I was almost tempted to make a midnight check. Although I had no record of a female boiler tender on my work list, I once found some dainty underthing in the corner of one boiler room. I hung it on the latch of the door hoping the rightful owner would come claim it but after a couple of days I had to dispose of it. I also found peep holes strategically bored in the walls behind the large boilers which looked into the Ladies shower room. These were found in various boiler rooms around camp. A cheap thrill for some of the "Lively Toms" in camp, and I really should have charged admission. Yes, each day was a new adventure.

Hundreds of Niseis (Second Generation Japanese Americans) were inducted into the U.S. Military Services during the early draft calls in the summer of 1941. They were stationed in the various military camps throughout the Union, and during the trying evacuation period of the early '42s. In spite of the inducted menfolks, no concessions, aid or privileges were offered to their struggling families, and hardship was experienced by many. I was exempted at the onset of the draft because of our occupation which was farming. I received a 2-C classification in 1941 which was a temporary exemption that I took into camp when we were evacuated.

Nisei GIs visiting their wives and parents in camp became a common sight. Almost every day of the week we would see men in khaki uniforms walking around camp. Parents and wives of servicemen were not exempt from confinement in camps, and also adults and children of mixed marriages and children with an ounce of Japanese blood, although adopted by non-Japanese spouses of internees who had given up their freedom of the outside world were often sighted in the various camps. In speaking with the visiting GIs, they told of being put into special compounds soon after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. They talked about the cool reception upon returning to their old neighborhood to see "old friends" and especially in Los Angeles where most orientals shunned them. They all proudly wore buttons denoting their respective Asian Race, hardly giving a thought to another Asian Race in dire need of moral and physical support. I honestly feel that a concentrated effort of the various Asian groups applying pressure to the proper authorities would have proven effective and speeded up and alleviated the problems forced upon us. It made the situation doubly hard to swallow when our own kind was also down on us for a small voice can be heard, if voiced with persistance.

Also sighted among the orientals were some wearing "I am not a Jap" button. Kind of makes me glad that those who wore these buttons, really were not. Incidents like these make a scene that I witnessed in 1943 more poignant in scope. I accompanied a visiting GI friend to the barrack of his aging parents. As I stood uneasily to the side, I'll never forget how he stood before his parents with his head slightly bowed and tears unashamedly coursing down his cheeks. What did go through the mind of this soldier and through the minds of all the other loyal Niseis in the U.S. Military Services as they visited their parents and wives in camps behind barbed wire fences. I would surmise that he said. "Father, Mother, I am truly sorry that this degrading, embarassing situation was forced upon you by my country. Please try to understand and be patient for I will serve my country well so that you may proudly hold up your head again someday."

#10A

WAR DEPARTMENT INVITES SHIRO AND CHUMS TO DON UNIFORMS

Inside WW 2 Manzanar, Part 10, By Shiro Nomura
Inyo Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

On my rounds of the boilers I could see the daily progress of the plasterboard crew as they lined the walls and ceilings of the barrack apartments. The new addition was joyously welcomed by the camp residents as it improved the appearance of our living quarters, but more importantly, it minimized the dust problems. We no longer would be inhaling the fine dust that would settle on us while we slept during a bad wind storm. We were also able to maintain a better temperature control during the heat of the summer and the cold of the winter.

The new walls deadened the eerie sounds of the howling winds considerably during those terrible windy nights, but best of all we no longer had to look at the bare stud exposed walls. The plaster board would cover the walls pock-marked with tin can lids and pieces of boards nailed on the walls to cover those knot holes. I doubt if we missed our polka-dotted art work too much. No longer would we have to lie on our metal cots and look up at the ugly exposed slanted ceilings with all the exposed wires and the criss-crossing beams. After what we had gone through this was like taking a room at the Ritz. (A section of this plasterboard with a picture painted by an anonymous camp artist was recently brought in and put on display at the museum by a local valley resident who salvaged it when the camp was being razed)

Contacting the head of the work crew (a friend, naturally) I had asked him to build a framework for a wall to separate our sleeping quarters from the living area which would allow the womenfolks a little more privacy. When the plasterboard crew finally worked their way around to our barrack in Block 21, all was in readiness to line the walls and the ceiling plus the added partition which gave the apartment a look of false elegance. At least, though, it added a little character to the otherwise barren room.

In the course of our so-called remodeling, my brother Shigeru who worked with the camp plumbers made a little kitchen for my mother with cupboards and a little sink with water piped in from the outside faucet. With materials picked up at the warehouse he also made a few water cooling systems and installed them in the apartments of all of our family. The water from the tap was the coldest and the sweetest (in spite of the chlorine that I have ever tasted. I can remember even during the hottest days in the summer it was almost impossible to stay for any length of time under the cold shower. Yes, I believe the good snow water from the Sierra was definitely another one of the pluses of our camp days. The same water coming into Los Angeles certainly doesn't taste the same.

Our apartment was probably typical of what other rooms looked like except for the added partition and as you entered our double door entrance (all end barrack apartments had double doors) we had a long bench lining the south wall to the right. On the east wall was one of the four windows in our apartment and just below the window was an oil burning heater (our cocoa and toast stove) with a couple of mini-benches on either side of it. By the doorway leading into our sleeping quarters we had a Sears and Roebuck card table with four folding chairs (a luxury) where my father spent hours reading and playing his favorite game of solitaire. Our kitchen was on the west wall of the room with a cupboard built over the water cooling system and a small cabinet up against the side of a small sink. All stools, benches and cabinets were made from scrap lumber or apple crates, whichever was available. The size of the room was approximately 12' X 20'. Really compact. Much like a miner's shack.

Relaxing in the refreshing coolness of the Manzanar evenings, the scorching heat of the day would almost be forgotten. The residents of each Block would be out en masse after supper, sitting on their steps during those hot summer months trying to escape the stifling heat of their apartments. The smaller children seemed to be the most fortunate for neither the summer's heat nor the winter's cold seemed to affect them too much. We would lie around on the cool lawn which had been planted between our barracks by the men in our Block and look up at the myriad of stars seemingly endless from one end of the desert sky to the other. Many a night I would look up at a particularly bright star and wonder if Amy would be watching the same star in Camp Amache. More than likely someone was looking at the stars in her eyes.

Coming from the coastal area where we always had an abundance of precipitation it was difficult to get used to the lack of it here in the valley. On a few occasions when we did get a little rain the thirsty desert sand would swallow it up leaving hardly a trace of a puddle. We had carved out wooden elevated thongs or slippers (we called it wooden getas) for wearing to the showers and it was ideal for walking in the rain. These were cut out of 2" X 4"s or 2" X 6"s, depending on the width of one's feet. The geta would make a clip-clopping sound as you walked and it was a familiar sound of the night as the wearer made his way to the shower room.

#10B

For recreation, after dinner softball leagues were formed under the supervision of Axel Nielsen who was the head of all recreational programs for Camp Manzanar. He was ably assisted by some of the resident sports leaders and a six-team major softball league was formed. Firebreaks between C and D Streets and First and Fourth Streets were leveled off and three softball diamonds were built. Later, as more teams signed up, a minor league and a girl's league were formed necessitating the construction of more ball diamonds. One of the serious drawbacks was the constant battle with the wind which would come up suddenly and prematurely terminating a game and many a game never got off its first pitch. Usually before each game the playing area would have to be cleared of loose sand and watered down. The recreation department enlisted the aid of the camp Fire Department and the firemen would saturate the field with their large fire hose before each game.

Our nightly cocoa and toast group of young men formed a team and entered the major league and made a very respectable showing for their first outing. In the interim, our nightly snack group now numbering about 30 strong had decided to form a club and I was asked to become a co-advisor for the group with Yo Ishida, another senior member of the group. My friend Kow was voted in as the club's first president.

My choice for the club name, Manzanites was over ruled to my sister Sadae's suggestion of changing the spellin to ManzaKnights. She said that the name Knights added more distinction to the name. It was unanimous. Basically a social, sports and service club, its' purpose was to bring better relationship with other youth clubs of the same age through socials and sports activities. Service to the community was in volunteering and aiding in the various camp activities. ManzaKnights, a name synonymous with the Knights of old, highly respected for their willingness to serve by the young and old, truly a cross section of some of the finest young men that I would ever hope to meet. Some of my fondest memories of camp and an incident that changed the course of my life and helped me attain the ultimate happiness was through my association with this fine youthful group. This is a story in itself and I shall relate it in a later issue.

In later months the popularity of the ManzaKnights swelled the membership to well over 50 members and a respected friend of the club, Joe Okabe was elected to the advisory capacity when co-advisor Yo Ishida stepped down to volunteer his services in the United States Armed Forces. His decision to volunteer was the culmination of many months of pros and cons after the government decided to accept volunteers from prisoners behind barbed wire enclosures. When the recruiting team of officers entered our camp to ask for and enlist volunteers, they came under a barrage of verbal abuse and indifference as the main body of internees were still smarting under the treatment received at the hands of the government. The first meeting was a flop. The enlistment officers became flustered at the questions thrown at them for which they had no answers. They red-facedly withdrew. They were totally unprepared to face a situation such as ours in which the victims so recently had been scarred. Like rubbing salt in the wound, we said.

The pro and con discussions which were held after the confrontation with the recruiting team proved that the pros were few and held a very weak voice and at that point they had very little argument going for them. Verbal arguments sometimes became violent and very physical. The extreme anti-factions would sometimes seek out their oppositions and try to convince them by physical means. I took the wait and see atitude along with many others and sure enough, within the year we were receiving an official letter from the White House, "Greetings from the President." The draft notices from our local boards had invaded the strict privacy of our protected "barbed wire world."

#11

BACKGROUND MATERIALIZES FOR ROMANCE AND SWEET POTATO PICKING

Inside WW 2 Manzanar, Part 11, By Shiro Nomura
Inyo Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

The heavy winds which had blown during the day had the camp residents scurrying for protection in their newly-walled apartments, but had abated sufficiently by dinner time so we were able to prepare the ball diamonds for our usual Twilight League softball game.

The shadows of the towering Sierra had gradually disappeared and the dark cloak of night soon blanketed the valley. The winds had died down to a whisper and the heat of the day had been forgotten offering us one of those typical blamy Manzanar nights. The stars like jeweled lights were out again in full force without a trace of a cloud in sight. The heady scent of the cottonwood trees and the desert sage which grew in abundance in the area filled the night air and the all too familiar sounds of the feeding and mating calls of the various insects punctuated the tranquility of the night. These are some of the sights, the scents and the sounds of Manzanar that I'll always remember.

On this night, in the company of a few members of the Manzaknights, we had started out for a friend's house in Block 6 which was in the extreme southwest corner of camp to play penny ante poker. On the way we decided to look in on a dance being held at our so-called Community USO Canteen in Block 14.

Dances sponsored by the various clubs came under the jurisdiction of the Community Activities Department, and all such social gatherings required a permit for the reservation of the Community USO Canteen, or as a matter of fact, the use of any recreation hall or mess hall. The use of mess halls, which was very popular because of the kitchen facilities, required a permit and the permission of the Block Manager who would first confer with the chef and the residents of said block. Refreshments served at the various socials diffe ed with the culinary talents of the hosting organizations. Finger sandwiches and punch was the usual offering, but sometimes a patronizing chef of a certain block would contribute some extra surprises to enhance the occasion. Needless to say those mess halls usually headed the list for popular party sites. Public address systems and turntables or record players were made available to the camp residents and they were able to check out records much like they would when signing out a library book.

As we neared the Canteen which was beautifully decorated with twisted strips of colorful crepe paper, a lovely throaty voice of a female vocalist could be heard coming over the public address system. As the voice drifted over to me in the still air of a magical Manzanar night it penetrated and struck a forgotten chord somewhere deep among my treasured memories.....

Memory took me back to 1940 in the month of August. The place, an old opera house in the heart of Little Tokyo, Los Angeles, which at the turn of the century must have been a grand and lavish entertainment attraction for the social circle of that era. Now renamed Yamato Hall, a tired weathered building badly in need of a coat of paint. But the interior which showed the gradual deterioration of many careless years somehow managed to retain the semblance of its once proud regal splendor. The occasion was the Annual Nisei Week Festival which was the Japanese-American cultural contribution to the city of Los Angeles.

Spotlighted on the stage, all eyes were glued on a lone figure of a gawky 14-year-old professionally presenting her rendition of "Liebestraum" in a beautifully strong and mature voice which belied her age. The overflow crowd, breathlessly sitting on the edge of their seats, were held spellbound. It was hard to believe that we were in the presence of a Nise "Deanna Durbin." I was completely hypnotized. I was young and raw, a dreamer with romanti inclinations and with a healthy imagination anything seemed possible. As unbelievable as it may sound, a voice from somewhere within brashly told me that I would marry that girl with her lovely voice someday. "Ridiculous," I said to myself, "She's much too young and she doesn't even know me from Adam."

The following year in 1941, the same Yamato Hall, the same stage, the same girl, but more poised and mature and again wearing her web of musical magic in her rich alto voice was completely in command of the occasion. In spite of Amy sitting at my side, I couldn't help but remember the deep impression that this young singer had made on me and the wild notion and ideas that had gone through my head the previous year. Was this an omen or a premonition of what was to be? Only time would tell.

In the ensuing months, culminating in the declaration of war with Japan, the indecisi the fears, the eviction notices, the eventual evacuation and the difficult adjustment to our daily camp style existence, I had all but forgotten about this young girl with the voice. Now as I stood by the canteen listening to this hauntingly familiar voice, it released a flood of memories of an awkward young girl center stage, Yamato Hall and of all the wild thoughts that had gone through my head. Yet, in spite of being in the same mile-square confinement and hearing her sing at different social functions, destiny willed that I was not to meet this Mary Kageyama for another couple of years.

Voluntary induction in the United States Military Services remained the main topic of discussions for many weeks after the departure of the recruiting officers. This was a total involvement of all men of draft age which numbered well into the hundreds including those that held student and industrial deferments before entering camp. There were those that completely ignored the military issue, but there was no escaping the impending involvement. Crash meetings were being held in the various blocks and it invariably ended in heated arguments, and an occasional physical disruption would terminate a meeting prematurely. Fortunately the cooler heads prevailed as disputes among ourselves was not the answer to the solving of this issue.

The following are some of the points that were brought up which mainly denounced the government that stripped us of our rights as citizens to live and pursue a normal life freely among our fellow citizens. Damning the organizations or bodies responsible for uprooting us from our homes, causing us financial hardships and forcing us into confinement bordered by barbed wire fences and surrounded by watchtowers manned by army guards with machine guns. Also for relieving us of our rights to vote, rights for free speech and importantly, curtailing our pursuit of happiness. Actually you can say that we had been reduced to nothing.

Then in comes the mighty military brass with orders from headquarters. They barge into this forbidden land of forgotten souls surrounded by barbed wire fences and guarded by machine guns day and night to liberate the poor souls if they are willing to risk their lives. "To fight for a just cause," they say, "to help preserve the freedom and the democracy that this country stands for." We are asked to prove our worth as citizens. To prove our loyalty to a country that some of us feel has turned its back to us. What of the other citizens on the other side of the barbed wire fences? What determines their loyalty? Their rights to citizenship? Do the recruiting officers invade the privacy of their homes?

In spite of the opposition that the volunteers encountered during those hectic weeks, the young men of Manzanar were well represented when the bus left the gates of camp for the induction center. These were the first of many young volunteers and draftees to leave their barbed wire world to fight the enemies of the United States. Although the enemies were in another part of the world overseas, probably some of the hardest battles that they faced were the hardships encountered here on our own shores with a populace that viewed them with contempt and suspicion. Records show of the services and sacrifices made by the Nisei GIs in their overseas tour of duty to prove their bravery and loyalty to earn their places in the sun for themselves and the rest of their people.

No sooner does the issue of the government's request for military volunteers die down, we receive another request for volunteers from a different department of the government. The Department of Labor sends out an urgent request for the farm labor shortage areas of Colorado, Idaho, Utah and Montana. In citing the critical shortages of farm laborers in the different states, the Department of Labor had said that this was due largely to most of the eligible men reporting for military duty. When we talked to some of the farmers later, we found this to be only partly true. The war-time pay of the defense plants and other industries had lured the farm laborers from the fields and into the cities. The Department of Labor was right in one respect though. The situation was very critical and without the aid of the men from the camps from Manzanar; Minidoka, Idaho; Amache, Colorado; Topaz, Utah; and Heart Mountain, Wyoming, much of the crops that were ready for harvest would surely have rotted in the ground. This was in the fall of 1942.

My nephew Carl comes to me with a request to head his crew. I was the only farmer in the group of four. He had filed an application of intent for a sugar beet contract in Montana. In my next chapter I will relate our experiences in a small town in Montana where no Japanese had ever been seen before.

#12

CITY DUDES, SCHOLARS, WHITE COLLAR CLERKS AND BUMS JOIN SHI TO WORK ON MONTANA RANCHES

Inside WW 2 Manzanar, Part 12, By Shiro Nomura
Inyo Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

In the ensuing days immediately following the government's emergency request for farm (stoop) laborers, the main topic of discussion among the menfolk turned to the subject of farming and the possible upcoming work furlough. The recent heated argument of volunteering in the armed forces was all but forgotten and the growing animosity between friends and neighbors abated somewhat in the weeks that followed.

Men from all walks of life, many having zero work experience with the soil and its backbreaking toil were keyed to a fever pitch. No amount of discouraging advice from the more experienced farmers, who were outnumbered by their city cousins, could stem the tide of their growing enthusiasm. We did talk some of them into signing up for some of the easier farm work or fruit picking in Utah. I knew that potato and onion harvesting and beet topping was the most backbreaking, and I, too, never realized what we let ourselves in for when we signed up for beet topping in Montana.

"Furlough Fever," as I termed it, was at a dangerous boiling point. It seemed possible that this sudden interest in the agricultural adventure would drain all of the available manpower and leave the camp helplessly undermanned. The meetings held in the Block 2 mess hall, presided over by a government representative, gave us the insight on the dire situation of the many farmers in the states of Colorado, Idaho, Utah and Montana. Our first thought was "So what! That's their problem for we have plenty of ours." But, after considering the short-term freedom and the extra cash, we all had a change of heart.

The terms and conditions were discussed and it was stated at the time that proper protecting measures would be taken to insure safe travel to and from our destination. The farmers requesting aid had to be registered with their local agency and each farm was to be inspected, and guaranteeing us suitable living quarters. The suitability clause by whose and what standard was never discussed but we were soon to find out first-hand. Term and wages were set to scale according to the type of work each crew signed up for. The potato and onion crops and of course the sugar beet topping headed the critical list with Idaho leading the states seeking volunteers.

There were no organized farm unions, therefore the payscale was very poor but to us underpaid prisoners in camp getting four dollars for a 40-hour week, even the lowest wages on the outside sounded like a fortune. But more importantly, we would be leaving the barbed wire fences far behind us and once outside, possibly try to regain the lost dignity of our former selves. Even though the contract only called for a maximum of 60 days, we could rightfully walk the streets as free citizens. When the authorities referred to our short term leave as a furlough, this was a misnomer of the first degree. As defined in my vest pocket Webster, furlough means vacation and we were all to find out painfully that this was a far cry from a vacation. I'm certain that there were some wishing to be back within the protection of the barbed wire fences after a week of stooping. The reasons for wanting to go back were not only physical but also of mental abuses during the early days as I will relate in the next article.

The men who had gathered in Block 1 for the registration on that August, 1942 morning were a cross section of the men in camp. Present were the scholars, the white collars, the brown collars, the farmers, the young and the old and even the camp bums who had all succumbed to "Furlough Fever." Most of them had never spent a day on a farm and did not fully realize the dawn to dusk existence and the inconvenient facilities such as a country privy house. The ironic part of all this was that in the spring of 1942 we had been evicted from our homes and herded into these camps and six months later they were requesting our aid and willing to spread us out over a wide area in the western states.

The main reason for deciding to sign a beet contract in Montana was because of the recruitors wonderful job of painting pictures in our minds of a beautiful green countryside different from the arid and barren shrub-covered Owens Valley where we were holed up. He also mentioned that the azure "Blue Canadian Skies" just spills over into the state of Montana, "God's Country," he stated. Yes, I'll have to agree on one count. Wher we eventually ended up it was truly "God's Country" all right. But only God would have lived there.

I went to the Public Works Office to see Mr. Sandridge to ask for a leave of absence and he wished me luck. I needed that, and more. I made my final rounds of the boiler rooms and to bid goodbye to my many friends (girls) on my daily route. There were always a group of older men in each block who would congregate on someone's doorstep each morning to listen to one of the men reading from a hand written copy of the early morning overseas news report received on someone's shortwave set (considered a contraband). Copies of this news report would be made and distributed to the various blocks in camp.

When I had first appeared on the scene with a clipboard under my arm as the boilerworkers timekeeper I must have looked like an important stranger as they all viewed me with suspicion. Later, my daily presence among them alleviated the situation and after deciding that I was not an "Inu" (an informer), I got along with them famously for I always did get along with older folks. I would walk among them and jokingly ask how the war was shaping up and they would either smilingly nod their heads or seriously shake their heads.

I couldn't help but notice that the moods of the older folks would be affected with the tide of the war. It is only fair to state here that we must sympathize with their feelings and try to understand the akward position that they found themselves in. They fully realized their obligations to their children who were born and raised here and to America, their adopted country even though the country steadfastly refused to sign the adoption papers. They were torn between the two countries and how their hearts must have suffered having families on both shores. My parents also had relatives in Japan. Activities and entertainments were not geared for the older members in camp so if their harmless daily clandestine news meetings (known to the administration) gave them an ounce of pleasure, I was all for it. I could see no harm in it.

Another secret that the older men shared, and this was also no secret, was the art of making moonshine. "Kaintucky Style." As I had written earlier, the camp regulations barred all alcoholic beverages from the canteen shelves, but some of it always found its way into camp. I decided while in camp that wrong-doers and criminals aren't born, but society and circumstances in many instances tempt them to go that route. For instance, in camp there were so many "do nots and don'ts," unlawful this and unlawful that, so that it became almost a challenge to even the odds. Usually done for need of excitement. One of my favorites was to sneak under the barbed wire fence on the Sierra side late at night dodging the searchlights from the three rear watchtowers, the shrubs, the cactus and the boulders and head for the Sierras. I'll relate some of my "on the run" escapades in a latter issue.

Moonshining whether inside or outside of camp was a federal offence but surrounded with the barbed wire fence and being on government property afforded the "camp moonshiners a certain degree of protection. If I estimated an average of a still in each residential block I couldn't be too far wrong. As a matter of fact, my brother Shigeru living in the next apartment had a live brew going. His only complaint was that while the brew was ripening the bubbling noise used to keep him awake.

With a friend in the food warehouse, or using a little camp politics, dried prunes and raisins and some cooking yeast from the block chef would form the ingredients for the start of a strong brew. My bother as a plumber had access to the copper tubing necessary for setting up a still in the mess hall kitchen and when the brew was ripe enough the men would take shifts and operate the still late into the night. The result was a beautiful clear liquid which I called "white lightning" and about as potent. You see how easy it is to get on the shady side of the law? In camp, much of the activities of this nature didn't seem to be so wrong. Perhaps it was the war years, the unfair camp experience or whatever it was, the full impact of some of the acts seemed so unimportant. More like a lark.

A few days before leaving on our work furlough, I heard from my sister Sadae that the were accepting and processing requests for transfers to other camps for the purpose or reuniting families and later for those with matrimonial intentions. She had filled out an application form requesting transfer to Camp Robinson in Little Rock, Arkansas where her fiancee Kuwa Inataki was stationed in the armed forces. She was told that it would take time to screen and process an applicant so I decided to apply for a transfer to Camp Amache in Colorado where my Amy was being detained. I was hoping that when I returned to Camp Manzanar from Montana my permit for transfer would be ready.

The morning of our departure for Montana was warm and windless, I bid my parents and my family and camp residents a solemn farewell and after loading my sleeping bag and baggage on the back of Kow's truck I tossed a final wave as we left Block 21 for the main gate The Greyhound buses were lined up near the main gate and it seemed as if half of the camp residents had come down to see the men off. Unlike a recent experience when we left the city of Los Angeles, we boarded the bus amid smiles and laughter which added a carnival-like atmosphere to the whole scene. The farewells and the goodbyes were not clinging and tearful as in the past.

I looked down at the upturned faces and immediately recognized my Manzaknight boys with Kow and his sisters Gracie and Rosie among a host of other friends. Far on the outskirts of the milling crowd I noticed that my nices and nephews had come down from Block 21 and among them was my aging Father who had somehow walked all the way to the main gate to see me off. I turned from the window for suddenly my vision became blurred as if I had gotten sand or something in my eyes. When I turned back, the bus had started to roll out onto Highway 395 and with a final wave out of the open window, I settled back in my seat hoping that my friends hadn't noticed how I had weakened at the last moment.

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MANZANAR LOVERS LAMENT AND THEN THE MONTANA EPISODE

By Shiro Nomura, W.W. 2 Manzanar Historian

MANZANAR SONG

I know a boy, and I know a girl at Manzanar
They try to feel that it makes no difference where you are.
It's as simple as this, they're in love.
And one private kiss they dream of.
But when he goes to see her, soon the folks all go to bed, but he feels he
wants to remain.
There's no place else to take her, to tell her that he loves her, and occasionall
I've heard him complain.

Chorus:
Our love affair of necessity must be,
A thing of public interest, not private property.
For there's Ma and Pa amd Sis and Bud,
To peer and jeer when I love you and you love me.
No place to park and watch the moon go down.
We can't take in a picture show or window shop the town.
We must do our romancing, with lots of people glancing,
But we don't care, just let them stare, and let them frown.
The mess hall can be the dinner at the Ritz, guayule your corsage.
Since gas is rationed, we must walk a bit,
But we can pretend our Packard is stored at camouflage.
So we'll go on and do the best we can
You're still my fav'rite glamor girl, and I'm your ardent fan.
It's just as good to pretend.
It's not so important when,
You're sure it's true, that I love you,
I think you know it, and I'll show it when I can.....

Words and music as written by Mr. Lou Frizzell in 1943 for the young people of Manzana and sung by the camp vocalist, Mary Kageyama (AKA "The Songbird of Manzanar") at a special camp assembly held to introduce his song. The lyrics capture and describe the frustrations the futility of camp romancing, the dilemma of young hearts as seen through the eyes of thi young Caucasian music instructor, Mr. Louis Frizzell. He was conspicuously Caucasian among his Oriental pupils, but his heart and soul blending with that of his students enabled him to command respect from each individual.

Barely older than his students, but most important, he shared the common feelings of the interned teenagers and in giving of himself unselfishly he was also able to bring out the best in himself. He was faced with a giant task at a comparatively young age of 21. With his unequalled compassion for the young people, his sincerity coupled with his untappe talent, he was able to capitalize on some of the rare talents of his students. The end results were protrayed in some of his superb musical productions presented to the administration and to the camp internees. Local residents as guests were often seen at some of hi productions. I also had a small part in one of his original productions, "Loud and Clear," in which I portrayed Eric, the business tycoon, from the east. I really felt more like a baboon on stage.

When the farm furlough buses pulled out of the gate and onto the highway, I looked back and watched the tarpapered barracks and guard towers and all of my treasured wealth, which were my family and friends, disappear behind us. Two months didn't seem such a long time but 60 seconds from camp and already I missed them. As the bus sped through miles of the familiar desert scene, I sat back in the comfort of the plush bus seat and closed my eyes to recount some of the events of the past few days. On the eve of my departure, I had taken a stroll with some of my Manzaknight boys for it was an especially fine night for a stroll after dinner. Many young couples were taking advantage of their last night together as many of the young men would be leaving with me in the morning. I secretly envied their tearful farewells in the privacy of a moonless Manzanar night. Someday soon my turn would come.

As much as had missed Amy while I was back in camp, for some inexplicable reason I would find myself longing more for the folks and friends in Manzanar during my stay in Montana. Was this long separation from Amy finally taking its toll? Was it only a sense of obligation for a promise I felt that I should honor? True, I had heard some disheartening news from a close friend, but our correspondence had always been on a regular basis. Some of her letters would be filled with empty words and it left me feeling cold, so this is why I had requested a transfer to Amache, Colorado to find out for myself if it was out of sigh out of mind, or if the distance really did make the heart grow fonder (for somebody else?).

We transferred from the Greyhound buses to trains in Nevada and started the long arduc train ride which would take us through Utah and Idaho. Camp food was great compared to our meals on the train. They box-lunched us all the way into Montana. One consolation though was that we got rid of the armed guards when we transferred to the trains back in Nevada. They had assigned us cars according to our destination and I never realized why until we had reached the town of Pocatello, Idaho, where one of our cars was bumped off on a siding and we waved to the men as we left them sitting there. They looked so forlorn sitting in an isolated car as we pulled out of the station. It felt almost like leaving part of our family behind. We were jolted awake again when we reached the town of Idaho Falls with constant bumping as trainmen uncoupled another of our cars and left it standing. We sped further north into the Rockies. The men in these two cars left in Idaho were slated for the potato fields.

The refreshing sight of the majestically tapered pine trees reaching out of sight was a welcome change of scenery from some of the desolate wastelands that we had traveled through. What a beautiful scene this would make after the winter snows had fallen. I gues ed we would be able to see it on our return trip. When we reached Butte, Montana, we left a car behind which was to be sent on into southern Montana to a city called Billings where a large contingent of farm workers had also been sent up from the concentration camp of Heart Mountain, Wyoming. This left two cars of our original five as we sped through the capital city of Helena and in a few hours by nightfall we were pulling into our destination the city of Great Falls.

The farmers had been arriving at the Great Falls station since early that afternoon of the day of our arrival. As our two coaches were uncoupled and pushed onto a siding a group of burly looking men in heavy winter jackets which made them look seemingly bigger strode over to the cars to look us over. Some of the farmers were looking at a Japanese face for the first time and their expressions showed evidence that they had expected to see a bunch of buck-toothed grinning faces wearing horn-rimmed glasses as we were made out to be in the cartoon caricatures they had seen. We must have really freaked them out when we opened the car windows to exchange greetings. They seemed surprised at our command of the English language which was more stylish than their country talk. "Ah reckon as how" they would have been less surprised if we had uttered a gutteral "ugh" and said, "How, white brother."

It's really unfair to pass judgement on the farmers as their only contact or knowledge of the Japanese race, citizens or not, were through the cold ruthless news media and their local newspaper or their favorite radio commentator. I remember when the Japanese first entered the camp in Manzanar, the local residents of Inyo County were curious about their new Oriental neighbors also. Almost daily, we would spot cars on the highway slow down as they drove by the camp and some would actually stop their cars and get out to watch the people and the activity in camp.

Sitting in our dimly lit day coach we looked down at a sea of strange faces and it was reminiscent of the evacuation experience when our buses first entered Camp Manzanar and we looked down at the mass of people searching out a familiar face. Only this time I was looking for a friendly face hoping that he would be our new employer. Shortly, a man in a business suit entered our car followed by a couple of men with clipboards. They welcomed us to Montana and asked if we had a pleasant trip. I don't really think that he was expecting any favorable answers for he wasn't a bit surprised when he got none.

The train ride had been too long, uncomfortable and super boring for most of us who visited, read or slept most of the way up. There were card games and an occasional crap game going on but these usually ended up with slips of IOUs being exchanged. Just imagine that some of those poor guys would be working the whole furlough just to pay back some of their gambling debts. Stupid! I know of one professional gambler in our car and I don't think he signed up for work. I'm sure he planned to do his work on our return trip after the men had gotten paid. "I'm staying clear of that bum," I decided.

Our crew consisted of my nephew Carl Yanagi who was great with girls, but not much for farming. "Lucky" Yamamoto who was a son of a pharmacist and with no knowledge of farming. Yoji Ozaki, a student but a willing worker who had helped on our farm back home and myself, raised on a farm hating it, but able to handle any phase of it. So you see we didn't have a heck of a lot to offer our new employer, but what we lacked in experience as a crew, we certainly made it up with our youth and enthusiasm.

We had been assigned farmers when we left camp and as they came into the coach to introduce themselves the members of the various crews would get up and leave with the farmer. When all of the registered farmers had claimed their crews, there were still three crews whose sponsoring farmers didn't show up. I don't remember the name of our farmer, but he never showed up. There were many non-registered farmers patiently and hopefully waiting for such a situation and this is how we met A.T. Tjaden who said he had been waiting since morning and had been the second non-registered farmer to sign up at the station. He was a comparatively young farmer (with a kind face) who gave us the impression of one just a few years out of college. We sat and talked awhile before signing up with him and I think we were swayed largely by his youthful appearance and his thinking. He seemed to be fully aware of our situation and in full sympathy for our cause.

He helped us load our baggage into his pick-up and told us that we had a long cold 65-mile drive to a small town of Conrad which was about midway from Great Falls to the

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Canadian border. I guess this is where the "Canadian Blue Skies" spill over into the state of Montana. I'm going to have to watch for that. We had to decide who sat in the back of the pickup and it was decided that Yoji and I sit up in the front for the first half of the trip so that I could talk to Tjaden. We piled the sleeping bags and duffle bags all around Carl and "Lucky" and with a large Indian blanket that Tjaden had thoughtfully brought along, they seemed protected enough from the cold wind as we started on the long ride to our new home.

The September nights in Montana were considerably colder as compared to the cool ever ings of Manzanar. Tjaden told us that the real cold weather hadn't set in yet and this wa why the furor about farm labor to try to get the sugar beets out of the ground and into th mills before the big freeze set in. He said that once the beets are completely frozen it loses the sugar content and it is worthless on the market. We found this out as some of our blood and sweat went for naught as a sudden freeze destroyed a couple of days work (24 hours of beet topping) when we weren't able to get the topped beets over to the mill.

The Tjaden's lived on a fifty-acre farm on which he was slowly paying off his mortage at the bank until his grain and sugar beet harvest. He said that he needed a good yield this year so that he could meet his mortgage payment and without our help he would have been forced to leave the major part of his crop in the ground to rot or feed his 50 head of cattle. As I had mentioned earlier, the farm labor force of previous years had been lured into the city or into defense plant jobs which paid considerably better wages for less work. There were a lot of Indians around, but apparently they weren't cut out for farm work as I saw very few on the farms. Tjaden said that they made themselves very scarce around harvest time.

We had Tjaden stop the pickup and Yoji and I reluctantly gave up our warm seats in th cab to trade places with Carl and "Lucky" who were nearly frozen. They were so stiff that they could hardly climb off the back of the pickup. And he said that the winter cold hadn really started yet. Gads! What have we let ourselves in for. We bundled ourselves down among the bags and pulling my woolen knit skull cap that my mother had knitted for me over my ears I gritted my teeth and curled up under the Indian blanket for the last leg of our trip.

After what seemed like an eternity, we finally reached the town of Conrad which had already rolled up its sidewalks except for a bar and an all-night cafe. The town of Conra was about the size of Lone Pine back in the forties, although they boasted a J.C. Penney Department Store which the towns around Manzanar didn't have. About fifteen minutes north of town we turned onto a dirt road which ran along a stretch of the barbed wire fence, the sight of which struck me like a blow to the stomach. Once again it was a helpless feeling of a foreboding entrapment similar to the first morning in camp when we awoke to find ourselves completely surrounded by barbed wire fences. What made it seem more confining was to see the cars and trucks speeding by a stone's throw away on Highway 395 which parallele the camp. It was with a sigh of relief to see browsing cattle beyond the fence reflected in our headlights assuring me that the fence wasn't for us after all.

We drove past a large building which was Tjaden's home and up to a little shack off t the side about fifty feet from the main house. Our shack was situated about mid-point between the house and a large barn where the tractor and farm equipment were kept. Beyond t barn were the usual farm animals and fowls which were angrily voicing their displeasure fo disturbing their nocturnal rest.

With my sleeping bag under my arm and the duffle bag slung over my shoulder, I led th way up the makeshift steps into the semi-dark room which was our combination kitchen and multi-purpose room. I headed for the direction of a kitchen table with a single light bul dangling from the ceiling and not noticing the large wood stove on the side, I cracked my shin sharply on the open oven door. The first words spoken were @*;Z!& and *!Y@;!. Hardl the proper welcome speech but seemingly fitting at the time. I'm glad Mrs. Tjaden didn't come out till later to meet us.

Tjaden stuffed the stove with firewood and soon had a roaring fire going. We welcome the fire and the coffee that Mrs. Tjaden had thoughtfully brewed for us for we had been frozen to the marrow. After hearing of my accident, she had gone for some gauze and iodin and she helped me clean my bleeding shins and bandaged it for me. She told me that she ha purposely left the oven door open to air because she knew we were coming and she apologize profusely making me feel bad, although she made me feel so good for being such a lady. Mr Tjaden was a delicate young woman about my age, wholesomely attractive and one you would hardly expect to find on a farm. The scar disappeared after many months but the painful incident and the memory of a beautiful young lady remains.

After the Tjadens left I spread out my sleeping bag on the hard planks which served as our spring and mattress and putting on my sweatsuit which was to serve as my pajamas I crept inside the bag too tired to do anything else. Lying in the dark I kept wondering ab my family and friends back in camp and missing them very much. In the darkness I could almost imagine that I could reach out and touch my parents' metal cot next to mine. We talked in the dark about what we would be doing the next day, but being thoroughly exhaust from the train ride we soon drifted off to sleep.

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1942 BLOODY RIOT FOLLOWED BY CHRISTMAS SPIRIT INTRODUCED BY KINDLY RALPH MERRITT

Inside WW 2 Manzanar, Part 14, By Shiro Nomura
Inyo Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

At the suggestion of Henry Raub, the editor of the Museum Bulletin, I am shelving the "Montana Beet Caper" until the following month and joining the staff in observing the Bulletin's holiday issue.

I would like to make a correction on my last issue regarding the Greyhound buses taking us to Nevada. We were taken to Barstow where we entrained on the Union Pacific and boarded some antique rattletraps being pulled behind the shiny streamliners. I don't recall too clearly, but I think even the caboose might have been riding up ahead of us. It was on our later trips that we entrained in Reno, Nevada.

In the month of December, Owens Valley blessed us with mornings which were crisp and clear, and every sound in the morning air was sharp and audible for blocks. On clear winte days, which were numerous, one could hear the noisy banging of pots and pans in the kitchen from the surrounding blocks and when accompanied by the sharp clattering of our heavy china and silverware it produced the orchestral sounds of our "Manzanar Breakfast Sonata." Coupled with the sound was the picturesque early morning scene, of our brown barracks standing peacefully in the sleepy valley framed by the towering snow-capped Sierra with white smoke and steam emitting from the mess hall chimneys. To look around in every direction from the center of camp where we lived, I could see the symetrically perfect fingers of smoke from each kitchen as they lazily tapered off to disappear from sight into the cloudless blue sky.

This was the month that the children of Manzanar had all been excitedly waiting for. Having forgotten the sadness and hardships of only months ago they had soon adjusted to their new life and to watch them in their daily play one could easily see that this was a happy place for them. The childrens' world is a wonderful place. I envy them. Sometimes I wish they would take us in. I wondered if Christmas would be coming to our camp, which was located so far from the regular mainstream of humanity, to visit the poor unfortunate children of Manzanar.

Yes, Christmas came to Manzanar, past the two guard houses, through the barbed wire fences and over the top of the tall watch towers which were manned by armed MPs around the clock. There were eight towers strategically placed around the perimeter of the mile-square camp with searchlights scanning the brush covered valley for adventurous characters like me who sneaked out of camp in the middle of the night to dash off into the desert. More about that later.

Christmas came to camp because of the innocent children who believed with faith and hope in their hearts and whose wishes and dreams had to be fulfilled. Christmas came in spite of a disturbance of major proportions which all but destroyed the month of December for the camp residents. I think that the month of December would have been a total loss without the children and Christmas.

Yes, Christmas came to Manzanar in spite of the camp being placed under tight martial law and crippling curfew imposed upon the residents of Manzanar. As usually is the case, innocent people had to suffer the consequences. Coinciding with the first anniversary of Pearl Harbor, a bloody confrontation ensued between a large group of demonstrators and the armed military police who had been guarding the camp security building. When the smoke had cleared, the casualty list included one dead, another who died in the hospital and many wounded. Earlier that evening a large crowd had gathered and the main body of demonstrators advanced on the security building demanding the release of three of their members who were being detained. When one of the leaders of the Japanese American Citizens League had been set upon and beaten, it resulted in the arrest of the men being held at the station. As their demands were repeatedly refused, the group became more boisterous and physical and as the evening wore on the demonstrators formed a line and serpentined around the front of the building. They continued chanting and weaving dangerously close to nervou guards who with gas masks and rifles with bayonet at ready set the stage for the events that followed.

According to the different sources I received varied versions of the tear gassing and the subsequent events that followed. Some say that the order to disperse had been yelled before the tear gas bombs had been lobbed into the group and others say that the gas bombs were thrown when the demonstrators' line moved in too close to the guards. I don't think anybody really knows for certain because it all happened so fast. At any rate when the blinding fumes had been released it caused the demonstrators to panic, scattering them in every direction. Some had stumbled blindly towards the guards when a nervous trigger finger of a frightened guard shot off the first round causing a panic reaction among the other guards who then fired blindly into the shadowy forms trying to escape the choking gas fumes. The shooting might have been avoided if strict discipline had been excercised by the military police for the only weapons were in their hands.

Although there were many sympathizers among the persons gathered at the security station only a small percentage of the group were the actual demonstrators. Unfortunately the two young men who were killed and some of the wounded were innocent onlookers. A young kitchen worker living in our block was hospitalized with four slugs in his legs as a grim reminder of that fateful night. He related that from the time he got a whiff of the gas and to the ride to the hospital, things happened so fast that his mind was very hazy on the details of the shooting. He only remembers that his leg gave out from under him and that he remembers falling. That's all.

My own experience started at 8 P.M. on the night of the shooting for I was completely ignorant of any trouble which had been brewing for days. I was sitting in our apartment with a couple of Manzaknight boys when we heard the kitchen bells ringing off in the distance. The other blocks quickly picked it up and soon the bells in the whole camp were clanging loudly sending the sound rippling across the deathly still valley. It had an ominous sound which sent chills down my back. I joined the menfolks who were rushing to the mess hall to answer the call. "Get a club or something and meet at mess hall #2" we were told.

When we got there the meeting was in progress and a man in a bloody P-Coat was speaking. He said that the blood was that of his friend who was wounded by the MP's rifle and while he was speaking there was a loud yell and a cloud of smoke was visible near the side door. The men in the front rows all started to run to the rear. We stood on the tables to get a better look and we were knocked down by the mass of bodies bearing down on us. There were sounds of falling bodies (mine included) windows being broken as some jumped out through the windows and doors being wrenched off hinges. I guess this is about as close to mass hysteria as I would care to get. I was helpless and it was frightening.

My brother and brother-in-law had taken my Dad to the meeting and having arrived late they had to stand by the side door. They said that a jeep with 3 MPs had driven by slowly and after yelling "Break it up" they threw a couple of tear gas bombs and roared off down the street. One of the bombs had narrowly missed my father but the other rolled into the hall near the speaker. This is what had caused the men in the front rows to panic and start a stampede to the back of the room.

Needless to say, this ended the meeting, and when I finally made my way out to the streets shadowy figures reflected by the street lamps were silhouetted in the dusty fire break running for their lives to the safety of their barracks.

The following day, December 8, martial law was declared and an 8 P.M. curfew was imposed on the residents of camp. This order was not rescinded until about December 20 which left the camp literally at a standstill after dark. An observance of the 8 P.M. curfew order meant curtailing all evening activities such as school programs, church and club meetings, night school, parties and dances. The searchlights which normally chased jack rabbits in the brushy wastelands outside of camp were adjusted during the curfew period to make a sweep of the barracks and fire breaks inside of camp. Armed MPs patrolle the campgrounds in a jeep with mounted machine guns day and night. During the day, any group of three or more were quickly dispersed as this was considered an unlawful assembly.

This set the s'age for another of my hairbrain escapades. We chose Moses Miyazaki's apartment in Block 6 which was in the furthermost southwest corner of camp to play our penny ante poker. More than the game itself I think it was the thrill and excitement of trying to outwit the MPs. Their order was to shoot first and ask questions later. Running from barrack to barrack and dodging the lights was no sport, but to avoid being seen by the MPs on the jeep was the challenge. We crawled under many barracks on the way. No man's land were the two fire breaks of almost a 100 yards each that we had to cross. The timing had to be perfect and once the signal go'was given, we had to run like hell. Once, and luckily only once the jeep made a short circuit and caught us still in the fire break. Suddenly there were five new tree stumps in the sandy fire break. Personally I think I made a better looking rock than a tree stump but there was no time to be choosey. Fortunately for us it was a moonless night.

When the curfew was finally lifted around December 20 there were no happy sounds of rejoicing or gaiety. It was almost as if they were fearful of being caught standing around talking. This went on for a couple of days before the camp returned to normal. Even then something seemed to be lacking.

The new project director, Ralph P. Merritt who replaced acting director Solon T. Kimball on November 24 contacted the U.S. Forestry Service and had arranged to have a Christmas tree placed in every mess hall, the Shonien (Maryknoll Orphanage), the hospital and the administration building. This was in hopes of boosting the morale of the children

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and older residents whose spirits had been severely dampened by the accounts of the past two weeks. A news article from the Manzanar Free Press (Camp newspaper) states that a total of 64 trees were brought down by the men in the Forestry Service.

Trying to return the camp back to a semblance of sanity the trees were artfully decorated by the residents of each block. Without the usual sophisticated commercial tree decorations, the people contributed talents which may never have surfaced, in making intricate tree decorations from tinfoil gathered from cigarette and gum wrappers, ornaments made from vaious sized tin cans and the lids. Various colored toothbrush handle bent into rings made colorful chains hanging from the branches. Then of course the popcorn balls and colored marshmallows strung into chains made the wide-eyed youngsters clap with glee. This was our first Christmas Tree in Manzanar and one of the prettiest trees that I'll ever hope to see. You see, this tree was decorated with ornaments that love had designed. In the following years the trees were decorated with Sears and Roebuck ornaments and it had somehow lost the true meaning of Christmas.

On Christmas Eve groups of young carolers had attempted to spread a little yuletide cheer around camp but it turned out to be a dismal failure. It could have been the high winds that blew all night and the next day which was Christmas Day which went on the record as the most miserable Christmas Day (weather-wise) that was experienced in Manzanar

I think if it wasn't for the Project Director's compassionate effort to bring a little joy and happiness into the lives of "his people" (Camp residents) and commanding a semblance of normalcy back to camp, there never would have been a Christmas. Here is a simple but sincere message that I copied from the Special Christmas Edition of the Free Press written by a dedicated man who weathered his baptismal under fire during his first month as our Project Director. He handled the problems firmly and fairly to all concerned and was able to restore law and order to a troubled camp. He unknowingly inherited troubles which had been brewing for months and had he been a lesser man he would have ended up being made the scapegoat.

Quote: "For all little children of Manzanar, I hope there will be Christmas Trees and presents and parties. For all boys and girls who yet are children at heart I hope there will be carols and dances and the happiness that belongs to Christmas. And for all of us who are grown up children, I hope this day brings peace, respect and goodwill. A Merry Christmas To All."

(signed)
Ralph P. Merritt

RALPH MERRITT'S ACCOUNT OF HIS FIRST CHRISTMAS AT MANZANAR

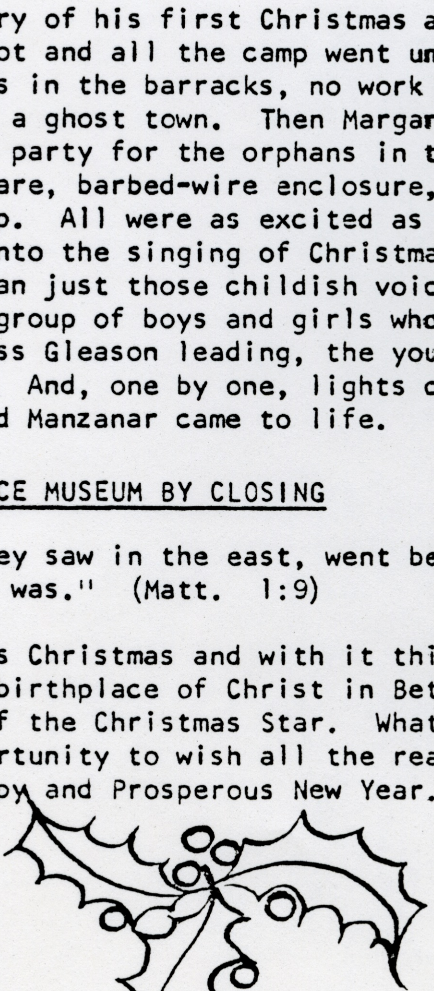
By Katharine Krater as recorded in her new book titled, EAST OF THE HIGH SIERRA on sale at Eastern California Museum for $4.50 plus 27 cents tax or $5.02 by mail.

Ralph Merritt told this story of his first Christmas at Manzanar. On December 7, 1942, there had been a bloody riot and all the camp went underground. No children came out to play, there were no lights in the barracks, no work crews functioned. One week, two weeks, and Manzanar remained a ghost town. Then Margaret Gleason, director of welfare suggested they give a Christmans party for the orphans in the Childrens' Village. Tucked way in a corner of that mile-square, barbed-wire enclosure, they had not been touched by the cloud that hung over the camp. All were as excited as children anywhere would be over the gifts and entered joyously into the singing of Christmas Carols. Suddenly Mr. Merritt realized there was more music than just those childish voices. Stepping out into the shar clear moonlit night, he found a group of boys and girls who had come to join in the carols With Mr. and Mrs. Merritt and Miss Gleason leading, the young people walked through the dark camp, singing as they went. And, one by one, lights came on in the barracks, voices called out "Merry Christmas!" and Manzanar came to life.

CHRISTMAS OBSERVED AT INDEPENDENCE MUSEUM BY CLOSING

"And, Lo, the star which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was." (Matt. 1:9)

The month of December brings Christmas and with it this story of the Christmas Star which guided the Wiseman to the birthplace of Christ in Bethlehem. Astronomers have long speculated as to the inception of the Christmas Star. Whatever its origin we at Eastern California Museum take this opportunity to wish all the readers of the Museum News Bulleti a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year..... "....As Tiny Tim observe God Bless Us, Every One!"



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SHI RESUMES TOPPING BEETS WITH ONE GOOD LEG TO OFFER HIS COUNTRY

Inside WW 2 Manzanar, Part 15, By Shiro Nomura
Inyo Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

On March 21, 1942, 88 adventurous volunteers of Japanese descent first set foot on the brush covered soil soon to be known as Camp Manzanar. You might even call them the 20th century pioneers who blazed the trail north out of Los Angeles to establish temporary homesites for the upward of 10,000 displaced citizens and non-citizens who were to follow. The volunteers were greeted by a few hastily built barracks to house them, the cold wind and the suffocating dust and stacks of dust covered lumber and building supplies piled high in a clearing for building additional barracks. The giant task of clearing the mi square area of brush and rocks lay ahead for them in preparation for building a total o 36 blocks of 15 barracks each. This project was completed around July of 1942.

By September of 1942, just six months later, Thomas W. Holland, WRA Chief of Employment was in Manzanar prompted by a nation in the throes of a farm labor shortage trying to recruit the imprisoned evacuees to come to the aid of the government that had put them there. It seems incredible that through lawful manipulation in Washington, D.C. thousands of able-bodied men (7,000 from the various camps) were suddenly available when the western states were faced with a labor shortage. The irony of it was, we were told to show our "patriotism" by helping to save the nation's sugar supply. How were the crops harvested in previous years? This was the situation which later found the Japanese spread out through the farmlands of Idaho, Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, Arizona and East Oregon and also which had brought myself and over 400 others into Montana all the way up to the Canadian border.

After a fitful night's sleep punctuated by nightmares I was awakened by the crowing of roosters by the side of our shack. The stove I had stuffed with firewood had long been burned out and the rooms were like cold storage. I was stiff from having slept curled like a ball and my leg was still aching from the nasty crack on the shin. The bandage seemed secure so I decided to get up and get some water to wash up. I had noticed the night before that there was no running water in the room and the only available water was in the cistern about 30 yards away next to the Tjaden's house. I set up a bench and with a couple of wash pans I made a makeshift wash stand where we would wash and do our laundry.

I made a number of painful trips to the pump to fill up a large wash tub which was placed in the corner of our kitchen. Noticing that I was up and around, Mrs. Tjaden brought over some bacon and eggs, a huge jug of fresh milk and a couple of loaves of bread she had just taken out of the oven. This beautiful gesture solved our problem. She apologetically inquired about my leg and left. I thought that before this "Montana Beet Caper" was over I'd be falling in love with that woman.

I soon had a roaring fire going which took the chill out of the room and I turned to the task of cooking our first breakfast in Montana. The eggs were fresh out of the barn, the bacon was home-cured, the milk was still warm and the bread fresh out of the oven. I must admit that camp was never like this. The smell of the bacon frying soon had the crew stirring and hurriedly washing. We sat down to a regal breakfast. We all naturally agreed that this had to be one of the best breakfasts we ever had. Since I had agreed to do all of the cooking, the boys were to share in the cleaning. The only disadvantage was that I would be up first to do the cooking as well as work till sundown with the crew and start my cooking after we all returned to the shack. It was an unfair arrangement for me, but I was more concerned about topping beets for tonnage since tonnage meant money.

After breakfast we walked around the yard that seemed so dark and mysterious the night before and all around us we saw the barnyard animals and fowl that had vociferously protested our intrusion the night before. Off to the side located about 75 feet from our shack, and with a well beaten path leading to it, we found what we had been looking for. It was the deluxe "Two-holer" otherwise known as the outhouse. I appreciated the fact that it was located down wind and far enough away, but there were some cold and wet nights when we had wished it was right next door.

Our 9' X 12' sized multi-purpose room was barren except for the huge wood stove and table with four chairs. There were no cupboards except for a couple of shelves and nails in the walls where I hung our pots and pans. A wild assortment of chinaware and silverware had been placed on the shelf for our use and the one window in our shack facing the Tjaden's house had no shade but a home-made curtain had been hung there for minimal privacy. In the far corner of the room was the wash tub for our supply of water and couple of earthen jugs for storing our drinking water. An old linoleum covered the uneven floor which made it a little easier for sweeping.

On either side of the wood stove there were two open doors which led into our (slightly bigger than a closet) bedrooms. The larger room had a bunk-type wooden plank bed built onto the wall and this was shared by Carl, Yoji and Lucky. I chose the smaller room which had a small wooden bed with hard planks. None of the beds had springs or mattresses. Had

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we known this we would have brought along some extra bedding. It took us awhile to get used to the metal cots and the straw filled canvas tick mattresses in Manzanar but this wood plank bed was altogether something else. It was going to be hard to get used to. Yes, very hard!

Tjaden dropped by shortly after we returned and took us out to a patch of beets that he had dug up for topping. This was a healthy plot of beets growing near the barn and the tops came well over our knees. I thought with beets like these we should top a lot of tonnage. The wicked looking "machete" that he showed us for beet topping was huge and the blade measured about 2½" X 18" which was squared off at the end and a 2" barb or hook welded on the end to pull up the beets for topping. He showed us how to pull up the beets with the hook, lay it in our hands, top it and toss it into the next row without a lost motion. The very first beet that I attacked was a huge one and buried deep. It wouldn't yield to my pull so with my left hand pulling on the beet top and the barb hooked into the beet I gave a mighty yank and the barb ripped through the beet and also ripped open the back of my left hand cutting open a vein. Another bloody mess.

Half-heartedly topping a few more beets, we decided to go into town for our supplies. We climbed into the pickup and drove through acres and acres of beets that we would top in the next 6 weeks. The tops on the beets that we passed were not as thick and heavy as those that we had just topped which meant that the beets would be much smaller. A few weeks later we found out how much smaller and that brought our average tonnage down way below our estimate. The recruitors had offered no minimum guarantee on this furlough work but inferred that we could earn good wages if we were willing to work hard. Some of the beets that we worked were so small that we couldn't hook our barb into it. Work your guts out and it was still impossible to make good wages. They had said that we would earn much more than we were making in camp and besides it was a patriotic thing to do. Working for $12 and $16 a month in camp, even slave labor on the outside could top that. I'll write more on the poor conditions experienced by some of the other crews, the treatment and the poor yields of some of the farms in Pondera County.

The town of Conrad was much larger than we had expected and the town which was so quiet the night we arrived was bustling with activity as we drove up to the market. There were no welcoming committees nor any banners waving in the breeze to herald our coming, but I hadn't expected any. At least a sign or two to acknowledge the fact that a group of patriotic prisoners had come to their county to save their sugar beet crops would have been acceptable. Maybe someday they will realize the important role that the evacuees played in the nation's vital farm program during the war years.

The market seemed unusually crowded as "folk hereabout" having heard that the Manzanar work force had arrived in Pondera County were out in force to catch a glimpse, and for some, their first look at an Oriental person. Feeling self-concious as it was, all of this attention made us feel uneasy and uncomfortable. We rushed through our shopping and loading the groceries on the pickup we went across the street to the Pondera Drug Store to pick up some medical supplies and to have that soda I had often dreamed about. At long last the "drought" was about to be over. We encountered a couple of "drug-store cowboys" without incident and with curious eyes following our every move, we sat at the ice cream counter not really knowing if we would be served. I tried to act casual as I studied the menu and also the female clerks out of the corner of my eyes as they cast furtive glances in our direction. After what seemed like ages (actually only a couple of minutes) one of the girls shyly walked over and in a surprisingly friendly manner asked to take our order. Perhaps noticeably, with a small sigh of relief I ordered a double chocolate soda. I hate to admit it that I was actually expecting to be refused service. My first soda since entering Manzanar was doubly enjoyable as I relished it to the last muffled gurgle. We purchased some stationery lots of first aid supplies (for me), a big bag full of candy bars for our snacks and headed back to the pickup. Thanks to the warm sincere friends that we made in the Pondera Drug, this was our headquarters and the high light of our weekly trips into the town of Conrad.

As we headed out of town we did see one sign on the barber shop window welcoming us to Conrad. It read "Welcome Japs! Ears lowered FREE." We later encountered other signs and incidents without any unpleasant confrontations, but some of the residents of Conrad did try to make our stay a little more bearable.

That night we sat around after dinner writing letters to our family and friends back in Manzanar. I wrote of the incidents of the last couple of days and how boring the train ride was coming up here. I wrote of the lousy food on the train (a skimpy sandwich three times a day), the cold nights here in Montana and our optimistic outlook for making some money. I wrote that tomorrow was going to be the supreme test for us. Wish us luck.

In the middle of the night I was awakened by the sound of a tractor being driven out in the field and I sleepily wondered what damned fool was out in the cold. I found out later the next day that Tjaden was busily turning over the beets for us to top that day. The sound of the tractor in the middle of the night became a familiar sound and a sound

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that I dreaded to hear for it was the prelude to each new torturous day. The breakfast that morning was unhurried as we tried to put off going out into the field as long as possible. We started topping trying to develop a rhythm which would make our moves smoother and less tiring but after an hour of steady topping, Carl and Lucky dropped their machete and sprawled out on the cool green leaves refusing to go any further. Stubbornly, Yoji and I kept up the pace and left them far behind. We somehow managed to work the better part of the day when Tjaden came out and suggested that we knock off early for tomorrow was another day. We unanimously agreed. We wouldn't be able to go back to Manzanar for at least six weeks so there was really no point in trying to top all of the beets in Montana in one week.

We must have been a pathetic sight as we dragged ourselves back to our shack. It was painful trying to straighten up after being bent over so long and who was it that said we Japanese were built for stoop labor? I had blisters the size of marbles on my right hand, my left hand was bandaged from the knife wound and limping badly on my right leg from the crack on the shin. Sadly, I only had one good limb left to offer to my country. My crew didn't look too healthy either. It took us a good week to get broken in which doesn't mean that the work got any easier. It just became a little easier to take. That night after a half-eaten dinner we sat around feeling sorry for each other and our mutual thoughts were, "What the hell are we doing out here?"

From Manzanar, approximately a thousand men and a sprinkling of women had signed up with the Utah-Idaho Sugar Co. to work the farmlands of Idaho and Montana, and another 100 had signed up with the Amalgamated Sugar Co. This created a severe labor shortage in camp as can be expected as 25% of the employable young men had left camp for "greener pastures." Women and high school students were recruited for some of the vital positions vacated by the departing furlough workers and each block resident resorted to recruiting volunteers among block residents for various block positions normally manned by paid personnel. Every department suffered a severe setback as the furlough fever had swept through the entire camp. I understand that the Public Works Department that I had worked for was affected the most. The majority of the workers were in the 18-25 year age group, 40 members were listed under 17 years old and there were 46 women accompanying their husbands. Out of the total of 1018 furlough workers, I would hazard to guess that over 95% of the workers after their first hard day out in the field all chorused, "What the hell are we doing here!"

After cleaning up the dinner dishes, the trio, minus horseplay and letter writing, quietly dragged themselves off to bed. I stayed up to change my bandages and after stuffing the firewood in the stove, I too, crawled into my sleeping bag expecting to be awakened by Tjaden's tractor or that damned old stewing rooster.

#15

LETTER TO THE EDITOR FROM VINCE MATSUDAIRA

Last spring, during the pilgrimage to the site of the former concentration camp at Manzanar, I was fortunate to have visited the museum in Independence. The curator there introduced me to a subscription to the BULLETIN, which regularly features the biographical articles from the pen of Shiro Nomura, sketching his memoirs as a young internee at Manzanar.

At long last Mr. Nomura has unvieled the basis, or roots, of an incident encountered by me when I was stationed with the Air Force, in Montana, ten years ago. I have recounted this incident to many over the years, but have never had the opportunity to examine my intrigue with it until now.

I was twenty-one then (1965), stationed on a radar site near Miles City, Montana. Although I was born in a concentration camp in Idaho, I grew up knowing little about what had happened. I was, however, fully aware of the racial bigotry that had plagued me through my growing years, and thus I was understandably paranoid and self-concious about my Japanese ancestry. Being stationed there didn't help my sensitivities much either, for I can recall seeing only two other oriental-looking people the whole three years I spent there.

One night I went to a local bar by myself, prepared to having service refused me, or being attacked by someone who might want to remember the war. As I said, I was paranoid. A few heads did turn, but I ignored the stares. Even the olive in my drink became a threat - staring at me. Then it happened. I felt a hand on my shoulder, and a rather raspy voice made my heart hide behind my stomach and my bladder quiver. "Hey, are you Japanese?" I froze.

"Are you Japanese?" he repeated. I thought I'd better answer before he started abbreviating the word "Japanese." So I clenched my fist, said a quick prayer, then lost my nerve. My answer, "Yeah, and what the hell do you want to do about it, buddy?" came out a rather meek and apologetic, "Yeth."

A long silence, then he yelled, lurching me out of my boots, "Hey, bartender, give this here man a drink!" I couldn't believe my ears at first, then as I recovered I got suspicious so I politely tried to refuse the drink. He growled, "You're gonna have a drink - on me!"

I was bewildered. "I don't understand." He then smiled. I noticed that the few teeth he had were in immaculate condition. He must have been in his late sixties, and his skin resembled beef jerky in both color and texture. I was terrified with the suspense.

He finally spoke again. "You see, son, you might be too young to know this, but our government did a terrible thing to your people during the war. Don't get me wrong, but I'm grateful in a way...in a selfish way." The bartender was just beginning to fill the order. The old man continued, most likely enjoying the way my face began to change from puzzled to dumfounded. "You see, our sugar beets were in great trouble because of lack of manpower and other things. But you boys came out of them camps and saved our crops. And ever since that time, I promised to buy every Japanese I see a drink, just to say I'm grateful."

I was more relieved than astounded at the time. I believe I called out to the bartender, "Make that a double!" The old man shook my hand, paid the tab, then disappeared into the night. I've not seen him since, and the incident has haunted me until Mr. Nomura's latest contribution to the BULLETIN.

Mr. Nomura, I owe you a double!

#16A

SOME FARMERS PROVIDED CHICKEN COOPS AND HOG PENS FOR MANZANAR WORKERS TO LIVE IN

Inside WW2 Manzanar, Part 16, By Shiro Nomura
Inyo Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

Received our first correspondence from Manzanar and what a welcome piece of mail it was. Two weeks have dragged by since our arrival in this small town of Conrad and it has been like a nightmare since. When I first signed up for this furlough work the contract had called for a minimum of six weeks of work, and I signed thinking "once a farmer, always a farmer" and that it was going to be a breeze. To be frankly honest about it I was busily counting the money that this job was going to bring in.

We soon found out that this assignment was much tougher than any of us had imagined and had we known of the rough days ahead I'm certain that the number of volunteers would have been much smaller. When you step out into the beet field, its like entering into another world where time stands still for hours on end. The sun seems to hang lazily overhead for hours before slowly moving on. The beet rows which are about a half-mile long seem like at least a mile or two, but somehow in spite of our aches and pains we had managed to work two weeks of our original six weeks agreement. Normally we would have been adding up the tonnage which meant money in our pocket, but we found ourselves subtracting the days from our calendar instead.

A letter from Gracie, Kow's sister had said that everyone including my family were well but that they were concerned about my injuries which without proper medical attention had gotton worse. I shouldn't have mentioned that in my letter. The cut on my hand had become infected and had caused me considerable pain. Camp Manzanar seemed to be surviving the drain of manpower caused by the furlough and operating smoothly without our assistance with the use of volunteers and emergency crews. Gracie also wrote that the weather had turned considerably colder and the short days and the cold north winds put a damper on the popular after dinner sports that they all looked forward to. Heavy Navy P-Coats had been distributed to the adults of the families along with "long-John underwear" which was a welcome addition for the older folks as some did not have adequate clothing for the cold months ahead. The lack of proper warm clothing for the women and childern was sorely missed that first winter in Manzanar and the majority of southlanders accustomed to the mild winters along the coastal area were wholly unprepared for the cold weather of Owens Valley. Churches and other sympathetic organizations had sponsored clothing drives back home and these had been distributed to some of the needy families in camp.

The mail included letters from Amy which had been forwarded to me by Kow and in her first couple of letters she didn't know that I was in Montana. I had mentioned to her my earlier correspondence that I had made application for transfer to Amache, Colorado as the screening for relocating and transferring of separated families and couples had started in September of 1942. Reuniting of families and bringing together couples from the various camps for the purpose of matrimony started up on a large scale when the applicants were cleared for transfer. It informed her that a form would be sent to her to verify my application for transfer to her camp and this would start the machinery in motion for us. Unlike transferring between camps relocating to states outside of the Western Defense Zone required a more complicated and thorough checking of individual records by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In the earlier proceedings, the applicants were limited to citizens of the United States only and the red tape required assurances from the prospective employers and acceptance by the citizens of the new community. These had to be recorded and also adequate housing had to be arranged and provided before permission for transfer was approved and grante In my case it was simply would Amy and her Camp Amache accept me.

We had started topping beets on an optimistic note having experienced topping some of the larger beets in a very fertile area. We had estimated that if the balance of the acreage on Tjaden's farm yielded the same tonnage we would be able to average better than five dollars a day which was considered a good day's pay. This only lasted a week and from that point on the beets kept getting smaller and smaller until by the end of the season it would have been difficult to separate the sugar beets from parsnips.

There were a couple mechanical beet loaders in the Conrad area which would have improvec our topping capacity but the big influential farmers held a monopoly on the use of it. Tjader name was on the list but so far down on the list that it would be a couple of years before he had any hopes of taking advantage of it. The beet toppers working with the use of the mechanical beet loader made out, better in tonnage because they topped beets continuously without stopping to load 2 or 3 times a day. It was the same old story where the big farmer gets bigger and the small farmer stays small.

One day when Tjadens truck had broken down at the weighing station, we had topped continuously that afternoon without stopping to load so we had a sizeable load sitting out in the field when we called it a day because of darkness. Tjaden finally drove in after our dinner dishes were done, asked if we would be willing to load up to save the beets from freezing. We knew too well what a good freeze during the night would do to the beets and

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if we chanced leaving it out all night, our whole afternoon's work would be reduced to hog feed. On another occasion we had been forced to load beets at night by tractor light but this one particular night was a night that we would long remember.

Now, every evening when we left the field to go back to our shack, Hank, who was Mrs. Tjaden's younger brother would release the fifty head of cattle to feed on the beet tops which were cut that day. On this night not realizing that the beets hadn't been loaded up, he had released the cattle as usual and they had scattered all over the entire area when we drove up in the wagon. We must have lost a good half-hour trying to play cowboys and herding the cattle back into the pasture. Lucky for us that the cattle eat only the beet tops and ignore the beets itself but if they had eaten the beets also it would have saved us a lot of grief and this is where the juicy part of the story begins.

Trying to load the beets by the light of the tractor was difficult enough and rather dangerous for we could easily have knocked each other out or turned our ankle as we scrambled around in the dark picking up the slippery beets. Our progress was limited and very slow until our eyes became accustomed to the dark and while working as a team with two of us on either side of the wagon we loaded with caution trying not to overthrow and hit someone on the other side. The beets felt unusually slippery in my gloved hands but assuming that the night air had moistened the dirt on the beets, I kept loading until something hit me in the face. I brushed my face with my gloved hands which was a mistake. My hands had smelled suspiciously of cattle so I moved into the tractor's light and discovered to my horror that I was covered from my shoes to my face with fresh cow dung. My crews first reaction was to laugh until they realized that the dirt they felt pelting them while loading the beets wasn't all dirt. We were totally smeared and intolerably smelly. I thought Tjaden was going to fall off of the tractor from laughing so much. So for the rest of the loading process we made sure that some of the "dirt" flew his way. We wouldn't want him to feel left out.

Returning to the shack we built two large bonfires on the side of the shack away from the Tjadens' house and with tubs of boiling hot water we stripped down to our shorts and bathed before entering the house. Our clothes and our shoes had to be thoroughly laundered and cleaned and it was about 2AM and 20 degrees when we finally huddled around our wood stove to thaw out before going to bed. The Tjadens must have thought we had gone off our rocker, but we were clean when we went to bed. As insignificant as an old wood burning stove may be it was the most valuable article in our shack. I learned to cook proficiently on that stove being able to control the high, medium and low heat by moving the pot around on the top of the stove. As for heat we would have frozen to death without it but during the real cold days even the stove couldn't keep us warm in the shack. I could remember standing close to white-hot stove and be warm on the side facing the stove but my back would be freezing. It's difficult to imagine that a huge wood burning stove couldn't warm up a small shack but with the thin walls the stove was inadequate in sub-freezing weather. Let me illustrate another incident and maybe I'll make you a believer. In the morning after washing up I would stand in the doorway and spray the ground with a pan full of water and in about a minute or so the water would turn to ice. Now the clincher. While standing next to the hot stove inside the shack, I would moisten my hair and as I ran the comb through my hair I would have to remove the "ice" from my comb. And this was a mild winter according to Tjaden.

One evening at the suggestion of Tjaden we drove his pickup into town to catch a movie at the town's only movie house. After purchasing our tickets amid the stares of those standing around and after a momentary delay we were coldly escorted up into the surprisingly empty balcony. I couldn't understand the empty balcony as this was my favorite section back home. I thought to myself how lucky we were to have the whole balcony to ourselves. Our seclusion was short-lived however when about a half-hour later a disturbance on the stairway leading to the balcony caught my attention. I noticed a portly woman with her mousy husband and three kids in tow who came up the stairs and sat down noisily behind us. They finally got settled and after several minutes of silence I heard a lot of whispering behind us and when I looked back I saw the large woman pulling her children after her saying to her husband, "C'mon, Joe, let's go. Now, Joe, let's go," and the Indian family casting suspicious glances back in our direction hurried down the stairs.

To admit that we were puzzled would be an understatement, but the pieces fell into place when we returned to the movie house two weeks later. We purchased our tickets and without a moments hesitation we were greeted warmly by the same usherette who practically took us by the arm and escorted us into the downstairs loge section. I had inquired about the balcony and she hesitantly told us that the balcony was full although the movie house downstair was less than half-full. After the movie and still a little puzzled at the turn of events I mentioned this to my new friend at the Pondera Drug store soda fountain and she filled in the missing pieces to the whole puzzle. To begin with, she apologetically related that the balcony that I coveted so much was "the reserved section" for Indians only and when we had gone to the movie house a couple of weeks ago we had posed a problem and the managemnt not wanting to risk the ire of the white patrons had hurriedly decided to send us up into the balcony. Something in the order of the "back-of-the-bus" treatment.

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Naive and ignorant country boys that we were we had taken the back of the bus treatment without complaining. But not so, with seven (Los Angeles city boys) other furlough workers who a week after our first visit had gone to the movie house to be escorted up into the balcony with the Indians. When the deliberate color barrier became apparent and that they were being discriminated against they stormed down from the balcony to accost the manager in the lobby and threatened to physically tear him and the joint apart. After the constable was called and order was restored the seven furlough workers were led into the loge section with the profound apologies of the management. We had missed the excitement as both of our visits to the movie house sandwiched the unpleasant incident and this explains the red carpet treatment on our last visit. It's funny, though why we never went back, but what had hurt me most was the fact that even the Indians refused to sit through a movie with us.

On various occasions during our shopping visits to town we would run into crews that worked around Conrad. There were groups who had left Manzanar after ours and were spread out on farms north of Great Falls into the smaller communities like Vaughn, Fairfield, Collins, Valier and as far north as Shelby which was another 25 miles closer to the Canadi border. Stories told by the workers confirmed stories of living conditions which was disgustingly bad in all areas. It made us feel like our shack was a chateau on the Rivier It seems that the popular sentiment and from some of the farmers point-of-view the quarter and facilities for ranch hands, "especially orientals" didn't require building new bunkhouses or remodeling to accomodate us. I, for one will attest that a popular phrase which was repeated more than once and heard by many was "After all, they're only Japs." It seems that a number of "living quarters" offered to the furlough workers were cleaned out sheds, barns and even chicken coops. In one instance a feed room leading into a pig sty had been cleaned out to serve as living quarters. This was a case in Fairfield, Montana and Frank Kageyama who had teamed with the Ichien brothers stated that their quarters stunk as much on the inside as it did on the outside. The flies were a problem and there was always the constant danger of having the house knocked off its foundation when the huge porkers would scratch their dirty bodies on the corners of the building.

A specific agreement in the contract had read in part, "In addition to the wages, the farmer agrees to furnish the workers without cost the following: a dwelling together with equipment and facilities for cooking, laundry, bathing and sanitation." The representative of each district was to have interviewed and inspected the farmer and his premises to see that it met the standards to which we were accustomed to. This like most contract just a bunch of words that no one bothers to read or honor.

A dispute involving about 35 men erupted when they registered a complaint with the local authorities and upon investigation it was booked as a legitimate complaint and formal charges were lodged against the offending farmers. The area where the most flagran injustices were perpetrated was in the small community of Valier, Montana. Some of the workers were made to live in pens and coops with "dirt floors" which had been raked clean of trash and droppings and canvas cots placed on the ground. The representative from the sugar company was appalled at the conditions and hurriedly relocated the groups to Blaine, Phillips and Valley Counties where conditions were more favorable. These were some of the areas of complaints and unfortunately these ignorant farmers were left without farm aid to harvest their crops and were also black-listed for future evacuee labor.

The crop yield in the entire Pondera County was disappointingly poor and the average yield for a 10 to 12-hour day was something like $2.00-$3.00 per day for a hard day's work. Deduct from that a dollar a day for food, not counting incidentals and we netted only a few dollars more than our friends in Manzanar. We finally quit topping when the beets got so small that it was almost impossible to get a load out after a hard day's work It was the first contingent of furlough workers who had trail-blazed into the labor starve northwestern states to suffer the mistreatments and the poor working and living conditions but they served to set a standard which improved conditions for the furlough groups that followed. Although areas that were uncooperative and nonproductive were constantly in an acute labor situation as reports from the past season would discourage men to sign up. Contract agreements and conditions including the pay scale had been revised and improved considerably. Also a new ruling which became very popular was passed allowing the worker to stay on with a farmer if they elected to do so. On the average, those who had signed up for work in Idaho fared considerably better financially and enjoyed better conditions than those of us who ventured further north into Montana. Idaho farmers and then later Utah popularly became the land of plenty for the hardy furlough workers that followed.

Next: My final days in Montana, then home again to Manzanar.

Wheezey Archie of Death Valley Junction went to see Dr. Christianson of Lone Pine as soon as he arrived from the smog blanketed wastelands of Southern California. "You've got a lung disease," the doctor announced, "but I wouldn't worry about it," he added. Wheezey replied that he wouldn't worry about it either, if the doctor had a lung disease.

17A

#17A

BEET TOPPING DAYS IN MONTANA CLOSE WITH A SNOW STORM

Inside WW 2 Manzanar, Part 17, By Shiro Nomura
Inyo Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

Twenty-eight days have been checked off on our kitchen calendar from the month of October. This was our record of many countless hours of back-breaking toil endured under the guise of serving our country on the farm front as we pursued the evasive dollar. To be perfectly frank I wasn't really as concerned about getting the highly rationed sugar on the American table during that period as I was in putting a little jingle in my pocket. Tha was our main objective. Freedom from camp was equally important but in my case that was secondary. It felt real good to be able to walk the streets again as a "free citizen," a privilege that other American Citizens had taken for granted, but somehow it lacked the complete feeling of true freedom. Six months restriction behind barbed wire fences had instilled in us a hidden fear. We had freedom of movement although limited to areas as we were still bound by contracts with the sugar company and our employers.

To some, freedom would mean doing the things they were not able to do in camp. The fortunate ones who worked on farms near the big cities were able to frequent bowling alleys, movies, good restaurants and even bars. But for those of us in smaller towns we met with more prejudice and consequently our activities were very limited. In the town of Conrad one of the "off limits" areas was the town's only rinky-dink skating rink which apparently in these parts was quite an attraction for the young people for miles around. On a Saturday night while my crew was busy with other things my friend at the Pondera Drug Store invited me to escort her to a skating party being held at the local rink. The thought occurre to me that I would be an object of curiosity among her friends and other such thoughts cross my mind, but I accepted hesitantly, but I accepted because I liked her.

Fearing the worst, I opened the door to the rink and she grabbed me by my arm as we entered. There was a stunned silence as all eyes turned in our direction and when she smilingly waved to her friends the room gradually came back to life. My initial uneasiness was soon overcome by their friendliness and sincerity. That night possibly opened up another form of recreation for the furlough workers in that area. We got along famously with the young people of Conrad from that time on.All it took was to get to know and understand each other.

My interpretation of freedom was more emotional than physical. I would take long walks in the hillsides and it was especially enjoyable after the first snow had fallen. This, to me was freedom. To be able to walk for miles in either direction without the guard towers looking down on my every move. While back in camp I remember crawling under the barbed wire when the camp was going to sleep, and by dodging the long sweeping arms of the searchlights scanning the lonely desert I would run, crawl and hide behind sagebrushes until I was out of range of the probing lights. All this for the thrill and a shot of freedom. I'd crawl atop a huge rock and watch the lights of our camp and the lights from the town of Independence blot out one by one as sleep settled down in the valley. Then I would start my perilous way back, running and dodging to crawl back under the fence leaving freedom behind me. I looked forward to my escapades in the lonely desert under the stars in my solitude I would find solace and warmth knowing that the same blanket of stars looked down upon Amy in Camp Amache.

With another day of beet topping behind us and with the dinner dishes cleared away, we would stuff the stove with firewood and our evening's ritual of reading and writing letters would begin. The tri-weekly Manzanar FREE PRESS which came to us in batches were always popular with us with news which kept us abreast of the latest developments in camp. An article in the paper stated that the camp co-op barber shop had recently opened in my block 21 with four barber chairs to trim the whole camp. It would have been physically impossible for only four barbers to handle all of the male heads in camp but with bootleg Tonsorial Parlors located throughout the camp they maintained a full schedule daily and were able to handle the load. Prices were reasonable but at our rate of pay it was still a dear price. Adults, 15 cents; children 10 cents; a shave was 15 cents and a trim for ladies was 25 cents. Private enterprises plagued the Camp Co-op System with barbering, ladies hair styling, sewing and carpentry to name but a few which were being operated by private individuals. It was deemed unlawful by the administration for any individual to conduct business of any nature where their services would be compensated with money.

During the first year, there were no drafting of Japanese for furlough work in most parts of the state of Utah and mainly in the Salt Lake City area. In spite of the plea of Governor Herbert B. Maw that Washington officials make provisions for the conscription of Japanese labor to save Utah crops, Chas. F. Ernst, director of the Central Relocation Project in Abraham stated that there will be no regimenting of evacuee labor. A letter from the Regional Director of the Mountain Region further states, "Salt Lake County has not been approved for evacuee labor-most of the state restricted since this is in the Military Zone." (Manzanar FREE PRESS, September, 1942) The following year restrictions were eased which opened up the state and again the evacuees were instrumental when called upon to save the crops in Utah.

The FREE PRESS goes on to say that by September 24 the population of Manzanar peaked at 10,044 (including the furlough workers). Counting the Caucasian employees that were housed in Manzanar the total number of inhabitants within the mile square barbed wire compound came to a grand total of 10,136, thus making Manzanar one of the larger camps and by far the largest settlement in the whole of the Inyo-Mono County area. A warning was also issued in the FREE PRESS directed to the men on furlough work outside of camp which read in part that all alcoholic beverages would be confiscated at the gate if found in their possesion or their baggages. Some of the early returnees had been found to have in their possesion, bottles of whiskey which they had tried to smuggle into their friends. This was very interesting. I'll relate later how I accepted the challenge and how I outwitted the stooges in uniform. They weren't going to get drunk on my booze.

A humorous note: Japanese workers failed as cotton-pickers down south. The officials dismissed the whole affair as a noble experiment and the inexperienced men were absolved of all blame. Tired and discouraged after their first day in the fields, they had averaged about 22 pounds where an experienced picker would be gathering about 200 pounds daily. They weren't so dumb for after all who would want to carry that much cotton around all day. They probably couldn't get used to the altitude up where the cotton bolls grew for stoop labor was the name of the game.

After reading my last article, I may have led the readers to form the wrong opinion of the majority of the farmers in Montana. True, although general conditions and the treatment of furlough workers may not have been up to standard, it would be grossly unjust for me to allow you to form a conclusive opinion on the basis of my article for the whole operation. The terrible conditions that were experienced by some of our men were isolated cases and the flagrant disrespect for a fellow man was not practised on all of the farms. There were some fortunate ones among us with good housing and proper facilities and too, there were some whose meals were prepared by the farmer's wife and also dining with the family. Incidents such as these were few and very seldom mentioned, but to maintain a fair balance I want it to be known. My personal view on the matter is that an important factor on some of the conditions can be attributed to the fact that some of the farmers themselves were sorely in need of proper housing and facilities.

Another point that bothered me was the opposite side of the ledger which did little for our reputation and this involved some young groups with a "devil-may-care" attitude who came out of camp to raise a little hell. Their work habits were generally very poor, with no prior farm experience and entirely without the initiative nor the desire to consider the plight of the farmer and his valuable crop. One such case was brought to my attention when Tjaden approached me one day to ask our aid in helping a farmer friend of his with most of his beets still in the ground and the threat of a snow storm in the air. It seems he had the misfortune of signing up a crew that I have just mentioned. We had just finished our contract with Tjaden and with nothing to do we welcomed the opportunity to make some extra money.

The next day we started to work as soon as it became light. The ominous looking snow clouds completely covered the beautiful blue skies that I had become so fond of and the air was damp and cold with the overcast skies threatening snow or surely rain. The beets were unbelievably larger than the beets we had been working and the possibility of doubling the tonnage started our adrenelin flowing. An hour or so later the regular crew of 5 young men dragged themselves into the opposite side of the field and after a lengthly cigarette session they made an attempt to top beets. They paced themselves well at a snail's pace, occasionally standing up to smoke or talk and didn't seem too concerned with the work at hand or the potential money to be made on this farm. This accounts for the reason the farmer was left with so much acreage to be harvested when the snows finally came. The five young men had logged very few hours but their tonnage exceeded ours by far for the same four weeks worked because of the size of the beets. It seemed so unfair and such a waste for there were so many of us who would have jumped at a chance to work a farm with this yield.

The automatic beet loader was scheduled to load up in a couple of days so we topped continuously for two days with only a short break for lunch from daylight to nightfall. We could see the tonnage pile up as we charged through the field like a horde of locusts. At night we would sit around the table completely exhausted as we happily discussed the possibility of finally making some money with another five days of hard topping ahead of us. On that happy note I stuffed the stove with firewood and we all jumped into bed to rest up for another big day.

I dreamed that I was walking in the snow with the wet snow pelting me in the face and as I brushed my face I awoke to find soft wet snow falling on my face from a hole under the eaves. I jumped out of bed and looked out of the window to see a white blanket of snow on the ground. I stuffed the hole in the eaves with some paper and climbed back into my sleeping bag and innocently thought how fun it would be to top beets in the snow. Little did I realize that this snow would bring to a close our Montana beet episode.

(OVER)

17C

By daylight I could see that the snow had fallen all night and steadily falling without a sign of letting up. I could see by the drifts of snow that beet topping was out for today. But if the snow should stop by afternoon, we might be able to get out in the fields the next day. But alas, it snowed and snowed for a day and a half leaving about fifteen inches of snow on the ground, completely covering the fruits of our labor. They had activated the beet loader at the first sign of snow but according to Tjaden the loader and the truck got bogged down in the field and rendered inoperable. Two days of blood and sweat, 24 hours of hard labor buried under all this beautiful snow and in spite of such a disappointing loss to us, I couldn't help but feel sorry for the unfortunate farmer as a good portion of his whole year's work was lost. What a heartbreak ending for all of us.

The snow season shortened our work schedule and it would be 10 days before we would entrain at Great Falls for our trip back to Manzanar. The snow had changed the appearance of the whole countryside and the fields that we had recently worked had mysteriously disappeared during the night. The hundreds of pheasants normally hiding in the grain fields had been driven into the brush which lined the Pondera Creek along Tjaden's property. The cattle stood silently in the fields unmindful of the cold, blowing steam from their noses as they chewed on strands of straw protruding out of the snow. Everything was peaceful and clean. The air was so still and crisp but surprisingly not as cold as expected. These were the familiar scenes in our final days in Montana as we would try to cram into 10 days as much memory as possible to take back to camp to share with our family and friends. Looking forward to seeing Manzanar, my family and friends, but dreading to have to say goodbye to the Tjadens whom I have learned to respect and especially to my friend at the Pondera Drug Store. How will I say goodbye?

INYO COUNTY IS SECOND LARGEST COUNTY IN THE UNITED STATES

#18A

SHI MAKES TOOTHBRUSH RING FOR SODA FOUNTAIN GIRL AND BIDS MONTANA FAREWELL

Inside WW2 Manzanar, Part 18, By Shiro Nomura
Inyo Museums Department Historian for Manzanar

With the dreaded beet-topping behind us, we were now able to look forward to a few days of complete relaxation, but the last week of our work furlough in Montana sped by rapidly as we made final preparation for our return to Manzanar. We spent part of our days shopping, shaping up our living quarters and settling up our account with Tjaden. We had set up a charge account at the Conrad Grocery Store where, in spite of our conservative life-style, we had run up a sizeable bill. When all of our accounts had been cleared and the money had been divided the end result was that we had averaged less than two dollars per day for 12 hours of extremely hard work. Our chances of making a few extra dollars on another farm was snowed under and when we left Conrad our two days of frantic topping was still under 12 inches of snow.

We busied ourselves for a day getting the shack back in order by mopping the floor, scouring the pans, cleaning the stove and chopping extra firewood for Mrs. Tjaden. I had noticed when I pumped water from the cistern to do my laundry that pieces of grey furry matter was floating in the tub. When I informed Mr. Tjaden he looked into the dark depths with his flashlight and made out what appeared to be a furry animal. We pumped out the remaining water and found out that a small rodent had somehow fallen in. After cleaning out the cistern, we spent hours transporting water from a natural spring several miles from the farm. Following this incident I used the water for cooking and bathing, but I couldn't get myself to drink it.

With the many packages deluging the various camp post offices, articles considered as contraband would be readily available to the furlough workers, so a new order was put into effect to try to control the flow. Lt. Gen. John L. Dewitt, Commanding Officer of the Western Defense Zone, ordered that all parcel post packages and express shipments coming into camp be inspected in the presence of the recipient and to confiscate any articles considered as contraband. But many articles on the contraband list used expressly by artisans and professional people were deemed permissible setting up a thin line between right and wrong. In spite of their tight security, various articles would find their way into the camp and heading the list was the camera. The ban on privately taking pictures lasted through 1943. The administration eased regulations when they opened up a Co-op Film Service Department for the convenience of the camp residents.

According to Archie Miyatake, at the request of the Manzanar Co-op, and with the consent of the War Relocation Authorities and the Ralph P. Merritt administration, an official photography studio was opened in the block 30 ironing room in the early months of 1943. In accordance with the WRA stipulation that the position of official photographer had to be a caucasian employee, Alan Hannibal was appointed to that position. Prior to this, all official camp photography was in the service of Alan Ramsey of the neighboring town of Lone Pine. Hannibal's inexperience in the photography field prompted a request for a replacement or to employ an experienced resident photographer to be assigned as assistant to the photographer.

Mr. Toyo Miyatake, a well known photographer from the downtown Los Angeles area, entered Manzanar with his wife, Hiro, sons; Archie, Bobby and Richard and daughter, Minnie in the spring of '42. Carefully packed among his personal belongings he brought into camp a couple of his famous lenses from his camera he had left stored in a federal warehouse in Los Angeles. Some will say that he had smuggled in contraband, but on the other hand these were the tools of his trade and Lt. Gen. Dewitt's new order a few months later placed Mr. Miyatake in a separate category as an artisan and a professional person. This is the thin line that separated us. During the early months he busied himself in the privacy of his apartment sorting through scrap lumber to build a box camera which housed the lens and made it operable with a mechanism that he fashioned himself. With this home-made model he carefully started taking shots of camp realizing with his professional knowledge the importance of his project and that someday his pictorial story in print would become priceless and famous. No personal gain intended, these black and white prints were to become the shameful evidence of a black page in our American history. (A replica of Miyatake's original model is on display in the Manzanar display case at the Eastern California Museum. This copy was built to be used in the television special production, "Farewell To Manzanar" directed by John Korty.)

With official authorization from the administration the members of the Manzanar Co-op approached Toyo Miyatake to become assistant to the photographer, Alan Hannibal. Seizing the opportunity to pursue his trade, Mr. Miyatake readily accepted and as it turned out Toyo Miyatake did all the work and Hannibal took all of the credit. Although one stringent rule had to be followed which stated that only the caucasian photographer was allowed to snap the shutter. So Toyo Miyatake arranged or posed the subject, adjusted and set the camera and with his head under the black cloth he would signal the official photographer and Hannibal would reach over from his easy chair, disengage his forefinger from his fist and snap the shutter. What a team and for this he was getting some of the taxpayers' money

#18B

Toyo Miyatake's home-made box camera was used in the studio and after about six months Mr. Hannibal was sent to Los Angeles to purchase new equipment to be used in the Manzanar studio. Archie goes on to say that he came back loaded down with old and obsolete equipment and that some were quite useless. It was soon after this incident that Alan Hannibal quit the masquerade and left Manzanar for parts unknown. In accordance with the regulation of a caucasian employee in the studio, wife of one of the camp officials was put on the pay roll as a photographer and assigned to the studio. information is that she spent the day knitting on taxpayers' money. The stupidity of this whole set-up so aggravated Mr. Miyatake that he and Archie held an audience with Mr. Merritt in his office to rescind the caucasion clause which was not necessary and a hinderance in the operation. They also discussed the possibility of having his own equipment sent up from Los Angeles to be used in the studio.

Mr. Merritt was an understanding and compassionate man; Manzanar and its residents benefited by his appointment to the camp. When he felt that an issue involving his people required attention, he pursued it to the final result. He was gifted with the necessary qualifications to be a camp director. He commanded respect (not demanded) and got it. Again he was confronted with a decision. Mr. Miyatake's request was an honest and legitimate one. After some thought and some regulation bending he called in Mr. Miyatake and consented to his request to have his equipment sent up from Los Angeles. As for his permission to add to his library of camp pictures Mr. Merritt's reply was, "When I look to the right, I cannot see to the left." Mr. Miyatake's future was "signed, sealed and to be delivered." Before my departure for Amache, Colorado, my friend Kow and I were one of the first to have our portraits taken by the newly assigned official photographer of Manzanar, Mr. Toyo Miyatake.

Another article which was a source of "headache" to the camp authorities, especially to the inspector that found it and to the recipient, if it got to him, was the alcoholic beverages from the outside world. The camp brands brewed in the secrecy of the apartments or in cellars under the barracks were being distributed around camp but the real thing from the outside was the most sought after. The word was out that the baggage of the returning furlough workers and their persons would be searched so it offered a challenge for me to devise a plan for getting some of this amber liquid into camp. After giving this matter considerable thought I went into town and purchased six half pints of this precious liquid and also a round carton of Quaker Oats, a bag of sugar, a bag of flour among other packages and a bottle of glue. Opening up the bottom of the packages, I removed some of the contents and placing a bottle of whiskey in each one then I resealed the packages. I placed these with the rest of my kitchen supplies and nailed on the lid for the trip back to camp. Bring on the inspectors.......I was ready for them.

The whiskey caper was almost a 100% success as only my candies and cookies were taken and most conspicuously missing was the 5 lb. bag of sugar (with a bottle) which was a gift from Mrs. Tjaden using her sugar coupon from her ration book. My other "special packages" reached me but I often wondered who the "honest inspector" was that "confiscated" my bag of sugar.

The snow on the ground never melted as the temperature remained near the freezing point and a couple of light snowfall had us wondering if we could travel the 60 miles down south to Great Falls to catch our train. Stranded for the winter? Not such a bad idea at that. Realizing that our stay in Montana was nearly over and our brief moment of freedom from the barbed wire fences was coming into its final days, we tried to fill our waking hours with as much activity as our little time afforded us. I had mentioned earlier, furlough workers had been offered the opportunity to remain on the job outside of the Western Defense Zone if they could be guaranteed permanent employment. Mr. Tjaden had approached me with an offer and I had given this matter considerable thought as my fickle heart urged me to stay. Tjaden had noticed my friendship with the girl at the Pondera Drug had deepened and he had hoped it would influence my decision, but my family ties were too strong and I had to go back before I could decide.

My last day in Conrad was spent shopping and saying my goodbyes to people who had befriended us. I was deeply moved by the sincerity of some of those I had met and it was difficult to keep a dry eye. I ran into some of the furlough workers doing their last minute shopping and it seems that this year was a poor season for most of the farmers. I walked past the barber shop which had displayed the sign, "Japs Welcome, Ears Lowered Free" and it was still there. Slightly soiled and torn at the edges but crying out to remind us that "all is not well." I stopped in J.C. Penney's to buy a furry green 3/4 length jacket which was the envy of my friends back in camp. It served me well during the cold winters.

I hurried over to the Pondera Drug to see my friend and to present her with a ring I had made from a couple of toothbrush handles. I had worked on the ring for the last three nights carefully carving and fusing in my initial "S" in white into the corner of a black ring with a white stripe running diagonally across the face of it. This was only my second attempt at it but it finished out all right.

#18C

April, 1976

During our early camp days there was a mystery of disappearing toothbrushes and at one time the canteen was completely sold out of them. Shortly after I became timekeeper I noticed a group of boys in block 9 filing strips of colored sticks. I later found out that these were the plastic handles of some of the missing toothbrushes. I watched them as they heated a strip of plastic under hot water until it became pliable, then they rolled it around a rat tail file and fused the ends together with acetone(nail polish remover). This was in its crude form, a circle, the first phase in the making of a ring. Then it required hours of filing, sizing and shaping and then adding on strips of colored plastics for designs or initials before the ring was ready for the final buffing with a soft cloth or suede. The result was a colorful ring, a finished product, each a one of a kind work of art. Later, clever artisans and craftsmen designed lapel pins, brooches, pendants, earrings, and many other forms of costume jewelry made from toothbrush handles, peach pits and pieces of scrap wood.

My crew of Carl, Yoji and Lucky joined me at the Pondera Drug to say goodbye to the employees there and also to the owner who was very suspicious of us when we first appeared on the scene six weeks ago. In fact the whole town was on a 48-hour alert until they got to know us better. As a parting gesture the owner treated us to a final round of drinks (sodas and malts) and on this happy note we took leave and bid goodbye to the town of Conrad and the people, but the memories we took with us. It was very difficult to say goodbye to someone I had become so fond of and I thought to myself as I said goodbye that if things didn't work out in Amache, Colorado, I was coming back to Montana. It was on this word we parted.

Early the next morning we tidied up the shack and after a leisurely breakfast we rolled up our sleeping bags and loaded our belongings on the back of Tjaden's pick-up. After a sad but warm farewell to Mrs. Tjaden and her brother I climbed into the back of the pick-up truck for I had volunteered to ride the first half of the trip on the back with Carl. The sun was out and in spite of the snow in the fields there was warmth in the air. The roads were clear and all indications were that it would be a pleasant ride down into Great Falls. As we drove out of the yard onto the highway, I can still remember Mrs. Tjaden and their child at her side standing in the slushy snow waving goodbye to us until we disappeared down the highway. I settled back among the sleeping bags for a nice comfortable ride back not having forgotten the miserable ride on our arrival. True, we had talked about my returning to Montana some day but with mixed feelings I knew deep down inside that I wouldn't be coming back.

#19

ANCIENT RAILROAD COACH AND GREYHOUND BUS RETURNS SHIRO TO MANZANAR

Inside WW 2 Manzanar, Part 19, By Shiro Nomura
Inyo Museums Department, Historian for Manzanar

As we sped along the highway leading to Great Falls we left the town of Conrad far behind and I said goodbye to another chapter in my life. We passed vast expanses of open ranges and seemingly endless miles of farmland still covered with large patches of snow and occasionally breaking the monotony was the famous buttes of Montana. As far as the eye could see, every acre of available land was under cultivation and according to Tjaden, most of the land in this area was originally homesteaded during the turn of the century. The farmers here are completely at the mercy of the unpredictable weather for most are dry land farmers and they rely almost 100% on the yearly rain for ground moisture. Sparse rain as was experienced in the Conrad farm area in that year of 1942, affected the growth of the sugar beets and wheat and the total yield was far below expectation.

That first year's work furlough hadn't been a very profitable venture for most of us but we were going back with immeasurable experiences and some pleasant memories. I could only feel sorry for the Tjadens and the many farmers like him, working hard year after year fighting the odds and the elements, trying to eke out a living. In bleak years like this they find themselves hard-pressed to meet the deadline for a loan payment or perhaps to meet a note on the mortgage on their farms. Someday I hope the Tjadens get a break. They deserve it.

We pulled into Great Falls a little ahead of schedule and after loading our baggage on the platform we bade Mr. Tjaden goodbye. After reminding me that his offer would still be open he jumped into his pickup for that long lonely ride back to his farm in Conrad. Having a little time before we boarded the train we decided to go for a burger and a malt which could be our last for a long time to come.

The city of Great Falls was much too large for us to try to explore in the short period allotted us so we stayed near the railroad area afraid to stray too far for fear of getting confused and lost. We did hear from the others that had come in earlier, who had stayed at a hotel that the city was clean and indeed, large. The people in the city took little notice of the furlough workers, perhaps thinking that they were Indians off of the reservation. It was just as well that we didn't take in the town because in our unkempt condition with long hair and beards and dressed as we were in our heavy navy P-coats we looked like a bunch of toughs.

The ride through the Great Rockies was just as I had imagined it to be. Perhaps even more so. The trees and mountains were blanketed with its mantle of virgin snow and some of the most magnificent sights that I'll ever hope to see were being unveiled before my eyes. Scene after scene of nature's unspoiled beauty flashed by as I viewed them through the large old fashioned picture frame windows of the ancient railroad cars provided for us. This was about the only favorable comment that I could make about this uncomfortable, old, dilapidated coach that we were made to ride in. While some of us were enjoying the unspoiled, unequaled beauties of winter, others were grouped around a makeshift table, seriously studying their cards in a poker game. At the other end of the coach a group of men were crouched over a pair of dice in the narrow aisle and as I had mentioned in an earlier article, the professionals were slowly taking charge of the situation. Some of the men would be going into camp poorer than when they left and possibly with money owing. At sixteen dollars a month, just how did they intend to pay back their debts? Damned fools!

Only hours since we had left Conrad and already it seemed like ages ago that we had busied ourselves preparing for our departure. Our arrival in Conrad that first cold night, the nasty crack on my shin, the tender Mrs. Tjaden, the gash on my hand, the many hours of desperate beet-topping, the cattle dung shower, our trips into town for our weekly grocery shopping, the movie episode, getting to know a special friend and the skating rink party; somehow it all seemed like a dream as I lay back and watched the landscape flit by. Conrad, Montana may soon forget us but I'll remember Conrad a long time: everytime I see a beautiful clear blue sky or a night when the star-studded sky seems so close that I could reach up and pluck the stars one by one, or hear a pheasant's call and the sudden flap of their wings in flight when I had frightened them during my lonely walks in the fields. Yes, I'll remember Conrad when I hear the chugging of a tractor off in the distance, the rooster crowing as dawn breaks, a wind-blown figure of a lass off in a distance with her light silky hair flying in the breeze and I won't need the scars that I carry to remind me of all this. I'll remember Montana without them.

My first experience with the Aurora Borealis in Conrad was very humorous and the thought of it makes me smile. About four in the morning I had walked outside of the shack and while sleepily standing there in the cold, I noticed the northern sky alive with what I first thought in my half stupor, to be dozens of searchlights on Broadway during one of their movie premier nights. The fingers of light were constantly moving across the northern horizon and some of the beams were slowly moving upwards and then disappearing into the darkness of the predawn sky. I was rooted to the spot, partly from fear but mostly fascination. Funny, I had completely forgotten what had brought me out into the cold night. As soon as I regained my senses, I ran inside to awaken the crew and like hypnotized dummies we stood out in the cold in our "long Johns" gaping at the nocturnal display until suddenly, I remembered my original mission. The next day I mentioned our experience to Mr. Tjaden and he told us that it happens frequently up here due to atmospheric conditions. I'm glad to have witnessed it.

A few days before our departure I had purchased a small camera that I intended to smuggle into camp. I took rolls and rolls of pictures hoping to take back a pictorial story of Conrad and our new found friends, but the films were misplaced during the course of our packing and when I returned to Manzanar, only the film in the camera was all that I had to show. These were the only pictures of the shack that we lived in and pictures of myself and the crew showing our long hair and our stubby growth of beard. My cherished rolls of films must have been thrown into the stove when we were burning the trash. I was able to get the camera passed the guards and the inspectors without any difficulty and it became a very special property which was passed from hand to hand in our group.

I kept wondering what camp life would be like after a taste of our restricted freedom on the outside. Would we be able to pace ourselves with the old lifestyle within the tight security of our barbed wire existence or would we be constantly aware of the freedom of the "outside" and become restless and bored? With each clackity-clack of the wheels, the train was taking me further away from my newly found interest but bringing me closer to my family and friends and to some of the answers to the questions that had been racing through my mind. Maybe I'll sneak out of camp again some night and go to my favorite spot by the stream and meditate.

The food on our return trip hadn't improved in quality but the portions had been increased. We were now getting two sandwiches and extra fruits. The box lunches were picked up at designated train stops and then distributed to the men for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The menu rarely varied, so after a couple days of this, even the mess hall food sounded awfully good. A couple of bottles were making the rounds of our coach but only a few of the men were taking advantage of it. For lack of good drinking water we had cold sodas brought in at every stop, if the opportunity was available.

The balance of the trip was uneventful and very tiring. We had to bundle up in our P-coats for lack of proper heating and there was also talk of burning newspapers in the aisles for a little extra heat. We welcomed the news that we were approaching Barstow, which meant that our travels were nearly over. The men, bedraggled, tired and irritable, perked up a little as we scrambled to get seats on the Greyhound buses which would take us on the final leg of our trip. The weather in California had cooled considerably from the day we left but hardly any comparison to what we experienced in Montana. We were told that we had just missed a period of Indian Summer weather with the temperature peaking up in the ninety's which was hard to imagine.

The bus driver confided to us that he had witnessed the personal baggage check at the inspection station near the entrance to camp and he said that it was conducted very strictly. He told of bottles and other contraband being confiscated which had me worrying about my camera. Others, who had ottles on their person brought them out and started to drink it rather than have it taken away. As you can imagine we had a few very inebriated men on our bus by the time the bus pulled off of the highway at the gateway to Manzanar. Surprisingly and contrary to the bus driver's story, the inspection was only routine and not very thorough. The fact that it was nearing the dinner hour might have contributed to our good fortune. Everyone was in a hurry. The camera that I had shoved under my belt went unnoticed and without the clothes check I could have left it in my pocket. After a short delay, we were registered and readmitted back into our war time home.

As I anxiously hurried to my home in Block 21 my appearance caused a number of heads to turn, but unmindful of the stares, I rushed on. I hungrily took in all of the familiar sights around me, the guard towers, the ugly tar-papered barracks and the children at play. The smell of Manzanar was all around me, the heady fragrance of sage, the cottonwood trees and the very familiar smell of the mess hall foods cooking. The sound of the crunching sand under my feet and the children's voices at play was music to my ears. But the sound that I had longed to hear was the kitchen bells which as if by a planned signal had started to clang noisily but beautifully as if to herald my returning. These are some of the things that I had secretly longed for during our stay in Montana.

Nearing my block, a lone figure had recognized me and came rushing out to greet me in the middle of the firebreak. Appropriately so, my favorite, Kow's younger sister, Rosie. Yes, I was back home again among my family and friends. It was indeed, good to be home.

BICENTENNIAL

Don't forget to visit Independence on July 3 and 4! Don't miss two days of picturesque and sensational Bicentennial pagentry! Celebrate your Nation's birthday at Independence!

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SHIRO RETURNS TO MANZANAR

Shiro Nomura

It was good to be back! How I had missed the sights, the sounds and scents of Manzanar. With tears in my eyes, I waved and nodded to my acquaintances along the way, hastening my steps as I neared my "home" in Block 21. I hadn't forgotten my hurts and embarassments, the angry frustrations and fears experienced during the trying evacuation period, but coming "home" to my family and friends somehow softened the nightmare of only a few months ago. Strangely, I was overcome with a warm feeling of comfort and relief when I found myself back among the familiar surroundings of cottonwood trees and tar-papered barracks. A brief taste of rightful freedom among my fellow citizens and an opportunity to make a fresh start in Montana was easily forgotten.

The first morning back in camp was a welcome change from my recent furlough experience in Conrad, Montana. I awakened from a troubled sleep to the concert of the mess hall bells. It would be weeks before I could sleep soundly. On a few occasions I sat up in bed in the middle of the night imagining I heard Tjaden's tractor digging beets in the distance. Realizing it was only my father snoring, I went back to sleep. What a wonderful feeling to be awakened by those mess hall bells compared to the crowing of a quartet of roosters that gathered every morning outside our window in Montana and noisily serenaded us as we tried to catch a little extra sleep. I vowed to stew a couple of those darn birds before we left there but decided they would be too tough for eating.

I hurriedly washed in the community washroom (I dreaded to use the "too public" latrine) and joined my friend Kow and his sisters Gracie and Rosie for breakfast of toast and coffee and a generous homecoming portion of scrambled eggs made with powdered eggs and milk. On each table was a large aluminum pitcher (on display at the museum) of water and a jar of nobody's favorite, apple butter, just as I remembered it. Occasionally a jar of peach or orange marmalade would arrive only to disappear and magically reappear in our barracks during toast and cocoa sessions.

Bacon for breakfast was a rarity and ham or sausages were unheard of. Yet the popular idea of the meat-starved public on the outside was different. An incident involving the camp Caucasian music teacher, Louis Frizzell, which took place in a Lone Pine cafe is indicative of the general feeling in the neighboring towns. Frizzell went to Lone Pine on business and stopped for breakfast. He unthinkingly ordered bacon and eggs and was immediately set upon by the waitress and a truck driver sitting at the counter. The waitress said because of the bacon being shipped into Manzanar to feed the Japs, none was available for the trade. The burly truckdriver verified the statement and added he just unloaded a shipment of beef and bacon at the meat locker at the camp. In spite of the hostile mood in the cafe, Frizzell tried to explain that the bulk of the shipment was ear-marked for the Caucasian employees that numbered nearly one hundred people. Realizing his words were falling on deaf ears, he bolted down his eggs and potatoes and made a hasty retreat to his evacuee friends in camp.

The camp hadn't changed much in my absence but the activities in the industrial area had picked up considerably. New buildings housing various factories were being built. By summer of 1943 the camp boasted a mattress factory busy trying to meet the demands of the camp, replacing the original straw and canvas mattresses. The furniture manufacturing department built office furniture and cabinets for the school and hospital. The sewing factory made most of the work clothes issued by the Government to the evacuees. Other articles of clothing were made to be sold by the Co-op in the department store canteen. Project Director Ralph P. Merritt arranged (at the suggestion of the internees) to have dried soy beans shipped into camp. Soon the camp was manufacturing its own shoyu (soy sauce) and tofu (soybean curd). Mung beans to grow fresh bean sprouts were also brought in and a section of the tofu factory was designated for that purpose.

The sage and brush covered area directly outside of camp on the southwest side had been cleared and the dry, rocky wasteland had been transformed into a green, productive farmland. Beyond the picnic area immediately outside the barbed wire fence, the chicken ranch was located. Soon egg production was sufficient to meet the demands of the many mess halls. At last the residents were occasionally able to enjoy honest-to-goodness, unadulterated, fresh eggs. Adjoining the chicken ranch to the south was the Manzanar hog farm. It was located "down wind", of course. We never did see ham or pork chops on the mess hall tables but it was rumored if one knew the right people such treats were available.

Soon over 400 acres of the valley wasteland were under cultivation. The apple and pear orchards, many sorely in need of care and attention, were heavily foliaged and producing fresh fruit to feed the 10,000 residents of the camp. The fertile valley soil, coupled with the green thumb knowledge of the internees, produced a heavy yield of vegetables on the farm. This necessitated the sale of the surplus to outlying towns and also to our sister camps in Poston and Gila, Arizona.

Living in a community with a population of 10,000 people jammed into a mile square area, we had the necessary ingredients for much fun with new-found friends, if we shut out the world and closed our minds to our present predicament and the Hell to which we were subjected. Close community living was an accepted thing to those who had been living in the urban areas, but for many of us who had come from the farming country, where socializing was limited to a week-end treat, camp living was novel and hungrily accepted. It seemed like a continuous picnic, almost like a month of Sundays. The same situation was noted in all ten permanent camps spread throughout the seven states. These were carefree times for the many "young at heart".

While in Montana there was always the nagging feeling there were a few among the people we had met who still looked upon us as enemies and we were subjected to stares wherever we went. Of course, some had never seen a Japanese before, but it was evident biased news media had blanketed the nation with propaganda. In spite of this, I believe our worst enemies were ourselves. Once inside the protective folds of barbed wire fences we immediately let down our guards and fell victims to a false state of contentment, loss of ambition and sight of the future.

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November 1976

Even in later months, as the relocation authorities provided job opportunities, initially in the Midwestern states, the general feeling of many in the eligible age group was a "wait and see" and "they can take care of us for what they did" attitude.

Understandably, memories were still vivid from the traumatic experiences of evacuation. This attitude can also be attributed partly to the fears of the outside world and not being willing to accept the cold challenge offered them. The salaries and hourly wages were considerably higher than the maximum of sixteen and nineteen dollars paid in camp but still considered sub-standard.

When regulations were eased and relocation rumors became a reality, the Relocation office in Manzanar was besieged with internees making inquiries and seeking applications for F.B.I. clearance. This usually involved one to six months. It was accepted as welcome news as part of America opened its doors to the aggressive and adventurous and to students seeking higher education.

The inevitable exposure of Japanese-Americans to a sorely misinformed public started in the Summer and Fall of 1942 with thousands of furlough workers spreading throughout the farming states west of the Rockies. Now, through Relocation, it would be up to the early relocaters, the true pioneers of our group, to serve as ambassadors of goodwill. Special recognition should be bestowed on the majority of this group for the tremendous images created by them wherever they settled. They performed well in business, school and especially as model citizens. Their true acceptance was evidenced by the heavy flow of job opportunities flooding the Relocation Office. The news of a warm reception in widespread areas was recorded in letters to friends back in camp. Relocation outside the Western Defense Zone had started.

I received my F.B.I. clearance on November 30, 1942. Now, what was I going to do? Go back to Montana? Fulfill my promises in Amache, Colorado, or stay with my family and friends in Manzanar? Next issue: My decision.... Also Guayule Rubber Experiment.

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MANZANAR EXPERIENCES

Shiro Nomura

The barbed wire fence, the fence that separated us from the rest of the world, was barely 50 yards from the end barracks. Another hop, skip and jump away was Highway 395 leading to Reno north and Los Angeles south. Although we had been spared the ultimate insult of an electrically charged chain link like those surrounding correctional institutions, there were eight huge guard towers, standing like sentries, guarding the entire camp.

Curiosity led us to the fence on numerous occasions but, with the shouted warnings from the armed guards on the towers, we learned to keep our distance. There were exceptions on those nights I had slipped through the fence, dodging the searchlights, seeking adventure and solitude out in the desert.

The nights in Manzanar were beautiful. At dusk, when the sun dropped behind the towering Sierras, the descending shadows would cloak the valley and engulf the bushes, trees and tar-papered barracks. Night would gently settle over the quiet camp, covering the entire valley with a solid blanket of stars. Mercifully, the menacing towers and barbed wire fence would gradually disappear from sight, but the searchlights were an everlasting reminder that the giant sentries were on constant duty. As the days went by, we paid less attention to them and learned to accept them as objects of the landscape.

On November 30, 1942, 74 names were cleared and released by the FBI. This made those persons eligible for relocation outside the Western Defense Zone or for transfer to another camp. I intended to transfer to another camp. Seeing my name among those listed on the bulletin board, caught me by surprise. I was totally unprepared for such an early release. I immediately started having second thoughts about leaving Manzanar, my family and new-found friends. Would I be the first to leave home? My sister, Sadae, had planned to join her fiance in Little Rock, Arkansas where he was stationed with the 442nd United States Army unit, but her clearance had not come through. Possibly her pre-camp employment, writing for the English section of a Japanese newspaper in Los Angeles, had delayed her release.

My original intentions after clearance had been to transfer to Camp Amache where Amy had been sent from the Santa Anita Assembly Center. My family had also been scheduled to enter the Santa Anita Assembly Center, but a last minute change in our orders had separated us and we were sent to Manzanar. There must have been many incidents similar to ours. When I notified Amy of my clearance, she immediately requested permission from the authorities for my admission to Amache. She wrote I would be notified. But, so much had happened in the 12 months we had been separated. I was not really certain of her true feelings, or mine so I purposely delayed filing my request for transfer.

Montana had meant security for me, a job, a home and a chance to marry a lovely local girl. Coming back to camp and seeing myself behind barbed wire awakened me to the fact I was still considered an enemy and a prisoner in a concentration camp. What did I have to offer? Living as man and wife on the outside would invite many distasteful experiences for her and living in camp certainly would not have been any easier. This had happened in the wrong era. I felt it would never work out. Seeing other people leaving Manzanar to be reunited with loved ones, who had been separated

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by the evacuation, made me realize my first duty would be to fulfill my obligations to Amy. But, I needed time.

I busied myself with camp activities. I coached a couple of young girls' baseball teams and also played for the Manzaknights. Joe Okabe and I were selected as Athletic Directors and I was kept busy coordinating the young mens' sports for the evenings and week-ends. I also applied and was accepted for a job as sportswriter for the camp paper, The Free Press. I held this job until I left camp for Amache, Colorado in June, 1943.

With my farming experience I should have applied for work on the camp farm. I could have been making top wages of $19.00 a month, but I had my belly full of farming. There was another area of farming that might have proved interesting and that was the Guayule farm located just south of Block 6.

The experimental Guayule project in Manzanar was started and developed largely through the efforts of the late Dr. Robert Emerson of the California Institute of Technology. Dr. Emerson was a foremost authority on photosynthesis. A genuinely warm and generous person of strong Quaker beliefs, he devoted a major portion of his spare time from Cal Tech on the Guayule project. With the full cooperation of his lovely wife and children, he had adopted the Japanese people and the guayule as his personal projects. With little or no Government funding available, he dug into his family savings to experiment further with the controversial rubber plant.

Due to war efforts, gasoline was tightly rationed and traveling was curtailed. To make it possible for his periodic missions to Manzanar, the entire Emerson family sacrificed the luxury of their cars and conducted their business and errands on bicycles, thus saving up the gasoline stamps for trips to Manzanar. Even in adverse weather, Dr. Emerson was seen commuting daily to his job at Cal Tech on his bicycle.

Why, you might ask. The answer is simple-- love for his fellow man. He felt so strongly he altered the lifestyle of his household, sacrificied the luxuries he had worked so hard to provide for his family. He felt he alone could not right the wrong the Government had perpetrated on his fellow citizens because of the slant of their eyes or the color of their skin, nor could he soothe the pain or erase the stigma of humiliation suffered by this proud race of people, but he did what he thought was right. He involved them in something that could open the eyes of the nation and make believers out of the Doubting Thomases'.

He firmly believed in the honesty and loyalty of these imprisoned people. He wanted to involve them in Guayule work as their contribution in the war effort, to help bring relief to a nation shut off from its main source of rubber, the Havea rubber from Malaya. Dr. Emerson wanted the internees to experiment and develop this sorely needed product. He was thwarted in his efforts by large corporations that would have been affected by this new and better method of producing quality rubber. His sacrifices were many, his rewards few--a sincere handshake, the respect and admiration of every one he came in contact with.

As soon as the Experimental Laboratory was opened at Mazanar, Dr. Emerson brought some mature plants from Salinas, California, where a government-funded Guayule project had been established earlier. Experiments conducted at the Manzanar Laboratory by head chemist, Shinpei Nishimura, produced high-quality rubber that proved to be far superior to the Havea rubber. Chemist Nishimura developed a

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method for purifying the rubber that even the Government-employed chemists at the Guayule project in Salinas could not duplicate. To this day, no method has been developed to equal his feat of 100% purity in the rubber. In a comparative stretch test, the Guayule was found to be far superior to the Havea rubber.

A miniature rubber tire made of Guayule rubber grown at Manzanar is on display in the Camp display at the Eastern California Museum. There is also a rubber sink stopper made at Manzanar donated by Frank Kageyama, a former Guayule experiment worker.

Seeds brought in from Salinas were broadcasted in prepared beds in the lath houses (photograph in museum display) by Guayule employees. As soon as they were mature enough, they were transplanted into milk cartons from the mess halls and then set out in the fields. Normally this would have taken six months from germination, but through experimentation, Frank was able to accomplish this in half the time, starting the growth-cycle much sooner.

Once the plants were set out, the Guayule matured sufficiently to form rubber the first year. However, the best yield would be from a mature plant of four years. A mature four year old plant would produce 3 times as much rubber as a two year old plant. So you see, my young friends, there are some rewards in growing old.

The Guayule plant went unnoticed as just another sage brush or scrub brush. The guayule workers, however, discovered the plant rated high on the cottontail and jackrabbit's food list. It was necessary to have a round-the-clock rabbit watch.

The plant required arid conditions, but without some rainfall, irrigation would be necessary. The rubber forms during a hot, dry spell when the plant sends up a rubber substance to protect itself from the heat. Three months after such a condition, a mature plant would have the greatest yield of rubber. The plant is then harvested, stripped, chopped (roots, stems and branches) and crushed in a paper mill. It is then dumped into a vat of water and the rubber floated to the top.

The arid climate and fertile soil of Owens Valley proved ideal for growing Guayule. The rubber plants grown at Manzanar had a far better yield than those grown at Salinas.

On a recent trip to Manzanar, Frank Kageyama went looking for a trace of the plants that were there when the camp was closed. Rabbits had cleaned out the area leaving only sage brush and scrub brush. Maybe he should have picked up the many rabbit droppings and dropped them into a vat of water and the rubber would have floated to the top. Who knows? But now I know where the rabbit gets its spring and bounce, it's been in a patch of Guayule.